



# TALES OF ACTION

SELECTED BY

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AND

H. A. TREBLE



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## SIR WALTER SCOTT.

1771-1832

### ESCAPE OF SIR ARTHUR WARDOUR

THE information of Davy Dibble, which had spread such general alarm at Monkbarns, proved to be strictly correct. Sir Arthur and his daughter had set out according to their first proposal to return to Knockwinnock by the turnpike road, but when they reached the head of the loaming, as it was called, or great lane, which on one side made a sort of avenue to the house of Monkbarns, they discerned, a little way before them, Lovel, who seemed to linger on the way as if to give him an opportunity to join them. Miss Wardour immediately proposed to her father that they should take another direction; and, as the weather was fine, walk home by the sands, which, stretching below a picturesque ridge of rocks, afforded at almost all times a pleasanter passage between Knockwinnock and Monkbarns than the highroad.

Sir Arthur acquiesced willingly. 'It would be unpleasant,' he said, 'to be joined by that young fellow, whom Mr. Oldbuck had taken the freedom to introduce them to.' And his old-fashioned politeness had none of the ease of the present day, which permits you, if you have a mind, to cut the person you have associated with for a week, the instant you feel or suppose yourself in a situation which makes it disagreeable to own him. Sir Arthur only stipulated, that a little ragged boy, for the guerdon of one penny sterling, should run to meet his coachman, and turn his equipage back to Knockwinnock.

When this was arranged, and the emissary dispatched, the knight and his daughter left the highroad, and following a wandering path among sandy hillocks, partly grown over with furze and the long grass called bent, soon attained the side of the ocean. The tide was by no means so far out as they had computed, but this gave them no

alarm ; there were seldom ten days in the year when it approached so near the cliffs as not to leave a dry passage. But, nevertheless, at periods of spring-tide, or even when the ordinary flood was accelerated by high winds, this road was altogether covered by the sea, and tradition had recorded several fatal accidents which had happened on such occasions. Still, such dangers were considered as remote and improbable ; and rather served, with other legends, to amuse the hamlet fireside, than to prevent any one from going between Knock-winnock and Monkbarns by the sands.

As Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour paced along, enjoying the pleasant footing afforded by the cool moist hard sand, Miss Wardour could not help observing that the last tide had risen considerably above the usual water-mark. Sir Arthur made the same observation, but without its occurring to either of them to be alarmed at the circumstance. The sun was now resting his huge disk upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the live-long day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendour gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapours, forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple, some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid colouring of the clouds amidst which he was setting. Nearer to the beach, the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver, that imperceptibly, yet rapidly, gained upon the sand.

With a mind employed in admiration of the romantic scene, or perhaps on some more agitating topic, Miss Wardour advanced in silence by her father's side, whose recently offended dignity did not stoop to open any conversation. Following the windings of the beach, they passed one projecting point of headland or rock after

another, and now found themselves under a huge and continued extent of the precipices by which that iron-bound coast is in most places defended. Long projecting reefs of rock, extending under water, and only evincing their existence by here and there a peak entirely bare, or by the breakers which foamed over those that were partially covered, rendered Knockwinnock bay dreaded by pilots and ship-masters. The crags which rose between the beach and the mainland, to the height of two or three hundred feet, afforded in their crevices shelter for unnumbered scapwag, in situations seemingly secured by their dizzy height from the rapacity of man. Many of these wild tribes, with the instinct which sends them to seek the land before a storm arises, were now winging towards their nests with the shrill and dissonant clang which announces disquietude and fear. The disk of the sun became almost totally obscured ere he had altogether sunk below the horizon, and an early and lurid shade of darkness blotted the serene twilight of a summer evening. The wind began next to arise; but its wild and moaning sound was heard for some time, and its effects became visible on the bosom of the sea, before the gale was felt on shore. The mass of waters, now dark and threatening, began to lift itself in larger ridges, and sink in deeper furrows, forming waves that rose high in foam upon the breakers, or burst upon the beach with a sound resembling distant thunder.

Appalled by this sudden change of weather, Miss Wardour drew close to her father, and held his arm fast. 'I wish,' at length she said, but almost in a whisper, as if ashamed to express her increasing apprehensions, 'I wish we had kept the road we intended, or waited at Monkbarns for the carriage.'

Sir Arthur looked round, but did not see, or would not acknowledge, any signs of an immediate storm. They would reach Knockwinnock, he said, long before the tempest began. But the speed with which he walked, and with which Isabella could hardly keep pace, indicated a feeling that some exertion was necessary to accomplish his consolatory prediction.

They were now near the centre of a deep but narrow bay, or recess, formed by two projecting capes of high and inaccessible rock, which shot out into the sea like the horns of a crescent, and neither durst communicate the apprehension which each began to entertain, that, from the unusually rapid advance of the tide, they might be deprived of the power of proceeding by doubling the promontory which lay before them, or of retreating by the road which brought them thither.

As they thus pressed forward, longing doubtless to exchange the easy curving line, which the sinuosities of the bay compelled them to adopt, for a straighter and more expeditious path, though less conformable to the line of beauty, Sir Arthur observed a human figure on the beach advancing to meet them. 'Thank God,' he exclaimed, 'we shall get round Halket Head!—that person must have passed it'; thus giving vent to the feeling of hope, though he had suppressed that of apprehension.

'Thank God, indeed!' echoed his daughter, half audibly, half internally, as expressing the gratitude which she strongly felt.

The figure which advanced to meet them made many signs, which the haze of the atmosphere, now disturbed by wind and by a drizzling rain, prevented them from seeing or comprehending distinctly. Some time before they met, Sir Arthur could recognize the old blue-gowned beggar, Edie Ochiltree. It is said that even the brute creation lay aside their animosities and antipathies when pressed by an instant and common danger. The beach under Halket Head, rapidly diminishing in extent by the encroachments of a spring-tide and a north-west wind, was in like manner a neutral field, where even a justice of peace and a strolling mendicant might meet upon terms of mutual forbearance.

'Turn back! turn back!' exclaimed the vagrant; 'why did ye not turn when I waved to you?'

'We thought,' replied Sir Arthur, in great agitation, 'we thought we could get round Halket Head'

'Halket Head!—the tide will be running on Halket Head by this time like the Fall of Fyers!—it was a'

I could do to get round it twenty minutes since—it was coming in three feet abreast We will maybe get back by Bally-Burgh Ness Point yet The Lord help us !—it's our only chance. We can but try'

'My God, my child!'—'My father! my dear father!' exclaimed the parent and daughter, as, fear lending them strength and speed, they turned to retrace their steps and endeavoured to double the point, the projection of which formed the southern extremity of the bay

'I heard ye were here, frae the bit callant ye sent to meet your carriage,' said the beggar, as he trudged stoutly on a step or two behind Miss Wardour, 'and I couldna bide to think o' the dainty young leddy's peril, that has ay been kind to ilka forlorn heart that cam near her Sae I lookit at the lift and the rin o' the tide, till I settled it that if I could get down time enough to gie you warning, we wad do weel yet. But I doubt, I doubt, I have been beguiled' for what mortal ee ever saw sic a race as the tide is rinnin' e'en now? See, yonder's the Ratton's Skerry—he ay held his neb abune the water in my day—but he's aneath it now.'

Sir Arthur cast a look in the direction in which the old man pointed. A huge rock, which in general, even in spring-tides, displayed a hulk like the keel of a large vessel, was now quite under water, and its place only indicated by the boiling and breaking of the eddying waves which encountered its submarine resistance.

'Mak haste, mak haste, my bonny leddy,' continued the old man—'mak haste, and we may do yet! Take haud o' my arm—an auld and frail arm it's now, but it's been in as sair stress as this is yet Take haud o' my arm, my winsome leddy! D'ye see yon wee black speck amang the wallowing waves yonder? This mornin' it was as high as the mast o' a brig—it's sma' eneugh now—but, while I see as muckle black about it as the crown o' my hat, I winna believe but we'll get round the Bally-Burgh Ness, for a' that's come and gane yet.'

Isabella, in silence, accepted from the old man the assistance which Sir Arthur was less able to afford her. The waves had now encroached so much upon the beach,

that the firm and smooth footing which they had hitherto had on the sand must be exchanged for a rougher path close to the foot of the precipice, and in some places even raised upon its lower ledges. It would have been utterly impossible for Sir Arthur Wardour, or his daughter, to have found their way along these shelves without the guidance and encouragement of the beggar, who had been there before in high tides. Though never, he acknowledged, 'in sae awsome a night as this'

It was indeed a dreadful evening. The howling of the storm mingled with the shrieks of the sea-towl, and sounded like the dirge of the three devoted beings, who, pent between two of the most magnificent, yet most dreadful objects of nature—a raging tide and an insurmountable precipice—toiled along their painful and dangerous path, often lashed by the spray of some giant billow, which threw itself higher on the beach than those that had preceded it. Each minute did their enemy gain ground perceptibly upon them! Still, however, loath to relinquish the last hopes of life, they bent their eyes on the black rock pointed out by Ochiltree. It was yet distinctly visible among the breakers, and continued to be so, until they came to a turn in their precarious path, where an intervening projection of rock hid it from their sight. Deprived of the view of the beacon on which they had relied, they now experienced the double agony of terror and suspense. They struggled forward, however; but, when they arrived at the point from which they ought to have seen the crag, it was no longer visible: the signal of safety was lost among a thousand white breakers, which, dashing upon the point of the promontory, rose in prodigious sheets of snowy foam, as high as the mast of a first-rate man-of-war, against the dark brow of the precipice.

The countenance of the old man fell. Isabella gave a faint shriek, and, 'God have mercy upon us!' which her guide solemnly uttered, was piteously echoed by Sir Arthur—'My child! my child!—to die such a death!'

'My father! my dear father!' his daughter exclaimed,

clinging to him—‘and you too, who have lost your own life in endeavouring to save ours!’

‘That’s not worth the counting,’ said the old man. ‘I hae lived to be weary o’ life; and here or yonder—at the back o’ a dyke, in a wreath o’ snaw, or in the wame o’ a wave, what signifies how the auld gaberlunzie dies?’

‘Good man,’ said Sir Arthur, ‘can you think of nothing?—of no help?—I’ll make you rich—I’ll give you a farm—I’ll——’

‘Our riches will be soon equal,’ said the beggar, looking out upon the strife of the waters—‘they are sae already, for I hae nae land, and you would give your fair bounds and barony for a square yard of rock that would be dry for twal hours’.

While they exchanged these words, they paused upon the highest ledge of rock to which they could attain, for it seemed that any further attempt to move forward could only serve to anticipate their fate. Here, then, they were to await the sure though slow progress of the raging element, something in the situation of the martyrs of the early church, who, exposed by heathen tyrants to be slain by wild beasts, were compelled for a time to witness the impatience and rage by which the animals were agitated, while awaiting the signal for undoing their grates and letting them loose upon the victims.

Yet even this fearful pause gave Isabella time to collect the powers of a mind naturally strong and courageous, and which rallied itself at this terrible juncture. ‘Must we yield life,’ she said, ‘without a struggle? Is there no path, however dreadful, by which we could climb the crag, or at least attain some height above the tide, where we could remain till morning, or till help comes? They must be aware of our situation, and will raise the country to relieve us.’

Sir Arthur, who heard but scarcely comprehended his daughter’s question, turned, nevertheless, instinctively and eagerly to the old man, as if their lives were in his gift. Ochiltree paused—‘I was a bauld craigsman,’ he said, ‘once in my life, and mony a kittywake’s and lungie’s nest hae I harried up amang thae very black



rocks ; but it's 'lang, lang syne, and nae mortal could peel them without a rope—and if I had ane, my ee-sight, and my footstep, and my hand-grip, hae a' failed meony a day sinsyne—And then, how could I save *you* ? But there was a path here ance, though maybe, if we could see it, ye would rather bide where we are—His name be praised !' he ejaculated suddenly, ' there's ane coming down the crag e'en now !'—Then, exalting his voice, he hilloa'd out to the daring adventurer such instructions as his former practice, and the remembrance of local circumstances, suddenly forced upon his mind : ' Ye're right—ye're right !—that gate—that gate !—fasten the rope weel round Crummie's-horn, that's the muckle black stane—cast twa plies round it—that's it !—now, weize yoursell a wee easel-ward—a wee mair yet to that ither stane—we ca'd it the Cat's-lug—there used to be the root o' an aik tree there—that will do !—canny now, lad—canny now—tāk tent and tak time—Lord bless ye, tak time—Vera weel !—Now ye maun get to Bessy's Apron, that's the muckle braid flat blue stane—and then, I think, wi' your help and the tow thegither, I'll win at ye, and then we'll be able to get up the young leddy and Sir Arthur '

The adventurer, following the directions of old Edie, flung him down the end of the rope, which he secured around Miss Wardour, wrapping her previously in his own blue gown, to preserve her as much as possible from injury. Then, availing himself of the rope, which was made fast at the other end, he began to ascend the face of the crag—a most precarious and dizzy undertaking, which, however, after one or two perilous escapes, placed him safe on the broad flat stone beside our friend Lovel. Their joint strength was able to raise Isabella to the place of safety which they had attained. Lovel then descended in order to assist Sir Arthur, around whom he adjusted the rope ; and again mounting to their place of refuge, with the assistance of old Ochiltree, and such aid as Sir Arthur himself could afford, he raised himself beyond the reach of the billows.

The sense of reprieve from approaching and apparently

inevitable death, had its usual effect. The father and daughter threw themselves into each other's arms, kissed and wept for joy, although their escape was connected with the prospect of passing a tempestuous night upon a precipitous ledge of rock, which scarce afforded footing for the four shivering beings, who now, like the sea-fowl around them, clung there in hopes of some shelter from the devouring element which raged beneath. The spray of the billows, which attained in fearful succession the foot of the precipice, overflowing the beach on which they so lately stood, flew as high as their place of temporary refuge; and the stunning sound with which they dashed against the rocks beneath, seemed as if they still demanded the fugitives in accents of thunder as their destined prey. It was a summer night, doubtless; yet the probability was slender that a frame so delicate as that of Miss Wardour should survive till morning the drenching of the spray; and the dashing of the rain which now burst in full violence, accompanied with deep and heavy gusts of wind, added to the constrained and perilous circumstances of their situation.

'The lassie!—the pur sweet lassie!' said the old man: 'mony such a night have I weathered at hame and abroad, but, God guide us, how can she ever win through it!'

His apprehension was communicated in smothered accents to Lovel; for, with the sort of freemasonry by which bold and ready spirits correspond in moments of danger, and become almost instinctively known to each other, they had established a mutual confidence. 'I'll climb up the cliff again,' said Lovel—'there's daylight enough left to see my footing; I'll climb up, and call for more assistance.'

'Do so, do so, for heaven's sake!' said Sir Arthur, eagerly.

'Are ye mad?' said the mendicant: 'Francie o' Fowlsheugh, and he was the best craigsman that ever spee'd a neugh (mair by token, he brake his neck upon the Dunbuy of Slaines), wadna hae ventured upon the Halket Head craigs after sundown—It's God's grace,

and a great wonder besides, that ye are not in the middle o' that roaring sea wi' what ye hae done already—I didna think there was the man left alive would hae come down the craigs as ye did. I question an I could hae done it mysell, at this hour and in this weather, in the youngest and yaldest of my-strength—But to venture up again—it's a mere and a clear tempting o' Providence.'

'I have no fear,' answered Lovel, 'I marked all the stations perfectly as I camē down, and there is still light enough left to see them quite well—I am sure I can do it with perfect safety. Stay here, my good friend, by Sir Arthur and the young lady.'

'Deil be in my feet then,' answered the bedesman, sturdily, 'if ye gang, I'll gang too, for between the twa o' us, we'll hae mair than wark enugh to get to the tap o' the heugh.'

'No, no—stay you here and attend to Miss Wardour—you see Sir Arthur is quite exhausted.'

'Stay yourself then, and I'll gae,' said the old man; 'let death spare the green corn and take the ripe.'

'Stay both of you, I charge you,' said Isabella, faintly; 'I am well, and can spend the night very well here—I feel quite refreshed.' So saying, her voice failed her—she sank down, and would have fallen from the crag had she not been supported by Lovel and Ochiltree, who placed her in a posture half sitting, half reclining, beside her father, who, exhausted by fatigue of body and mind so extreme and unusual, had already sat down on a stone in a sort of stupor.

'It is impossible to leave them,' said Lovel—'What is to be done?—Hark! hark!—did I not hear a hallo?'

'The skreigh of a Tammie Norie,' answered Ochiltree—'I ken the skirl weel.'

'No, by Heaven!' replied Lovel, 'it was a human voice.'

A distant hail was repeated, the sound plainly distinguishable among the various elemental noises, and the clang of the sea-mews by which they were surrounded. The mendicant and Lovel exerted their voices in a loud hallo, the former waving Miss Wardour's handkerchief on

the end of his staff to make them conspicuous from above. Though the shouts were repeated, it was some time before they were in exact response to their own leaving the unfortunate sufferers uncertain whether, in the darkening twilight and increasing storm, they had made the persons who apparently were traversing the verge of the precipice to bring them assistance, sensible of the place in which they had found refuge. At length their hallo was regularly and distinctly answered, and their courage confirmed, by the assurance that they were within hearing, if not within reach, of friendly assistance.

The shout of human voices from above was soon augmented, and the gleam of torches mingled with those lights of evening which still remained amidst the darkness of the storm. Some attempt was made to hold communication between the assistants above and the sufferers beneath, who were still clinging to their precarious place of safety, but the howling of the tempest limited their intercourse to cries as inarticulate as those of the winged denizens of the crag, which shrieked in chorus, alarmed by the reiterated sound of human voices, where they had seldom been heard.

On the verge of the precipice an anxious group had now assembled. Oldbuck was the foremost and most earnest, pressing forward with unwonted desperation to the very brink of the crag, and extending his head (his hat and wig secured by a handkerchief under his chin) over the dizzy height, with an air of determination which made his more timorous assistants tremble.

Haud a care, haud a care, Monkbarns ! ' cried Caxon, clinging to the skirts of his patron, and withholding him from danger as far as his strength permitted—' God's sake, haud a care !—Sir Arthur's drowned already, and an ye fa' over the cleugh too, there will be but ae wig left in the parish, and that's the minister's.

' Mind the peak there,' cried Mucklebackit, an old fisherman and smuggler—' mind the peak—Steenie, Steenie Wilks, bring up the tackle—I'se warrant we'll sune heave them on board, Monkbarns, wad ye but stand out o' the gate.

'I see them,' said Oldbuck—'I see them low down on that flat stone—Hilli-billoa, hilli-ho-a!'

'I see them mysell weel enough,' said Mucklebackit, 'they are sitting down yonder like hoodie-craws in a mist; but d'ye think ye'll help them wi' skirling that gate like an auld skart before a flaw o' weather?—Steenie, lad, bring up the mast—Od, I'se hae them up as we used to bouse up the legs o' gin and brandy lang syne—Get up the pickaxe, make a step for the mast—make the chair fast with the rattlin—haul taut and belay!'

The fishers had brought with them the mast of a boat, and as half of the country fellows about had now appeared, either out of zeal or curiosity, it was soon sunk in the ground, and sufficiently secured. A yard across the upright mast, and a rope stretched along it, and reeved through a block at each end, formed an extempore crane, which afforded the means of lowering an arm-chair, well secured and fastened, down to the flat shelf on which the sufferers had roosted. Their joy at hearing the preparations going on for their deliverance was considerably qualified when they beheld the precarious vehicle by means of which they were to be conveyed to upper air. It swung about a yard free of the spot which they occupied, obeying each impulse of the tempest, the empty air all around it, and depending upon the security of a rope, which, in the increasing darkness, had dwindled to an almost imperceptible thread. Besides the hazard of committing a human being to the vacant atmosphere in such a slight means of conveyance, there was the fearful danger of the chair and its occupant being dashed, either by the wind or the vibrations of the cord, against the rugged face of the precipice. But to diminish the risk as much as possible, the experienced seaman had let down with the chair another line, which, being attached to it, and held by the persons beneath, might serve by way of *gy*, as Mucklebackit expressed it, to render its descent in some measure steady and regular. Still, to commit one's self in such a vehicle, through a howling tempest of wind and rain, with a beetling precipice above

and a raging abyss below, required that courage which despair alone can inspire. Yet wild as the sounds and sights of danger were, both above, beneath, and around, and doubtful and dangerous as the mode of escaping appeared to be, Lovel and the old mendicant agreed, after a moment's consultation, and after the former, by a sudden strong pull, had at his own imminent risk, ascertained the security of the rope, that it would be best to secure Miss Wardour in the chair, and trust to the tenderness and care of those above for her being safely craned up to the top of the crag.

'Let my father go first,' exclaimed Isabella, 'for God's sake, my friends, place him first in safety!'

'It cannot be Miss Wardour,' said Lovel; 'your life must be first secured—the rope which bears your weight may——'

'I will not listen to a reason so selfish!'

'But ye maun listen to it, my bonny lassie,' said Ochiltree, 'for a' our lives depend on it—besides, when ye get on the tap o' the heugh yonder, ye can gie them a round guess o' what 's ganging on in this Patmos o' ours—and Sir Arthur's far by that, as I am thinking.'

Struck with the truth of this reasoning, she exclaimed, 'True, most true, I am ready and willing to undertake the first risk—What shall I say to our friends above?'

'Just to look that their tackle does not graze on the face o' the crag, and to let the chair down and draw it up hooly and fairly,—we will halloo when we are ready.'

With the sedulous attention of a parent to a child, Lovel bound Miss Wardour with his handkerchief, neck-cloth, and the mendicant's leathern belt, to the back and arms of the chair, ascertaining accurately the security of each knot, while Ochiltree kept Sir Arthur quiet. 'What are ye doing wi' my bairn?—what are ye doing?—She shall not be separated from me—Isabel, stay with me, I command you!'

'Lordsake, Sir Arthur, haud your tongue, and be thankful to God that there's wiser folk than you to manage this job,' cried the beggar, worn out by the unreasonable exclamations of the poor Baronet.

Farewell, my father !' murmured Isabella—' farewell, my—my friends !' and, shutting her eyes, as Edie's experience recommended, she gave the signal to Lovel, and he to those who were above. She rose, while the chair in which she sat was kept steady by the line which Lovel managed beneath. With a beating heart he watched the flutter of her white dress, until the vehicle was on a level with the brink of the precipice.

'Canny now, lads, canny now !' exclaimed old Mucklebackit, who acted as commodore ; 'swerve the yard a bit—Now—there ! there she sits safe on dry-land.'

A loud shout announced the successful experiment to her fellow sufferers beneath, who replied with a ready and cheerful hallo. Monkbarns in his ecstasy of joy, stripped his greatcoat to wrap up the young lady, and would have pulled off his coat and waistcoat for the same purpose, had he not been withheld by the cautious Caxon. 'Haud a care o' us ! your honour will be killed wi' the hoast—ye'll no get out o' your night-cowl this fortnight—and that will suit us unco ill—Na, na—there's the chariot down by, let twa o' the folk carry the young leddy there.'

'You're right,' said the Antiquary, readjusting the sleeves and collar of his coat, 'you're right, Caxon ; this is a naughty night to swim in—Miss Wardour, let me convey you to the chariot.'

'Not for worlds, till I see my father safe.'

In a few distinct words, evincing how much her resolution had surmounted even the mortal fear of so agitating a hazard, she explained the nature of the situation beneath, and the wishes of Lovel and Ochiltree.

'Right, right, that's right too—I should like to see the son of Sir Gamelyn de Guardover on dry land myself—I have a notion he would sign the abjuration oath, and the Ragman-roll to boot, and acknowledge Queen Mary to be nothing better than she should be, to get alongside my bottle of old port that he ran away from, and left scarce begun. But he's safe now, and here a' comes' (for the chair was again lowered, and Sir Arthur made fast in it, without much consciousness on his own part)—

'here a' comes—Bowse away, my boys ! canny wi' him—a pedigree of a hundred links is hanging on a tenpenny tow—the whole barony of Knockwinnock depends on three plies of hemp—*respice finem, respice funem*—look to your end—look to a rope's end—Welcome, welcome, my good old friend, to firm land, though I cannot say to warm land or to dry land. A cord for ever against fifty fathom of water, though not in the sense of the base proverb—a fido for the phrase—better *sus. per funem*, than *sus per coll* '

While Oldbuck ran on in this way, Sir Arthur was safely wrapped in the close embraces of his daughter, who, assuming that authority which the circumstances demanded, ordered some of the assistants to convey him to the chariot, promising to follow in a few minutes. She lingered on the cliff, holding an old countryman's arm, to witness probably the safety of those whose dangers she had shared.

'What have we here ? ' said Oldbuck, as the vehicle once more ascended—' what patched and weather-beaten matter is this ? ' Then, as the torches illumed the rough face and grey hairs of old Ochiltree,—' What ! is it thou ? —Come, old Mocker, I must needs be friends with thee — But who the devil makes up your party besides ? '

' Ane that 's weel worth ony twa o' us, Monkbarns, — it's the young stranger lad they ca' Lovel—and he's behaved this blessed night as if he had three lives to rely on, and was willing to waste them a' rather than endanger ither folks Ca' hooly, sirs, as we wad win an auld man's blessing !—mind there 's naeboddy below now to haud the gy—Hae a care o' the Cat's-lug corner—bide weel aff Crummie's-horn ! '

'Have a care indeed,' echoed Oldbuck 'What is it my *rara avis*—my black swan—my phoenix of companions in a post-chaise ?—take care of him, Muckle-backit '

'As muckle care as if he were a greybeard o' brandy, and I canna take mair if his hair were like John Harlowe's.—Yo ho, my hearts ! bowse away with him ! '

Lovel did, in fact, run a much greater risk than any of



his precursors. His weight was not sufficient to render his ascent steady amid such a storm of wind, and he swung like an agitated pendulum at the mortal risk of being dashed against the rocks. But he was young, bold, and active, and, with the assistance of the beggar's stout piked staff, which he had retained by advice of the proprietor, contrived to bear himself from the face of the precipice, and the yet more hazardous projecting cliffs which varied its surface. Tossed in empty space, like an idle and unsubstantial feather, with a motion that agitated the brain at once with fear and with dizziness, he retained his alertness of exertion and presence of mind; and it was not until he was safely grounded upon the summit of the cliff, that he felt temporary and giddy sickness. As he recovered from a sort of half swoon, he cast his eyes eagerly around. The object which they would most willingly have sought was already in the act of vanishing. Her white garment was just discernible as she followed on the path which her father had taken. She had lingered till she saw the last of their company rescued from danger, and until she had been assured by the hoarse voice of Mucklebackit, that 'the callant had come off wi' unbrizzed banes, and that he was but in a kind of dwam.' But Lovel was not aware that she had expressed in his fate even this degree of interest, which, though nothing more than was due to a stranger who had assisted her in such an hour of peril, he would have gladly purchased by braving even more imminent danger than he had that evening been exposed to. The beggar she had already commanded to come to Knockwinnock that night. He made an excuse—'Then to-morrow let me see you.'

The old man promised to obey. Oldbuck thrust something into his hand—Ochiltree looked at it by the torch-light, and returned it—'Na, na! I never tak gowd—besides, Monkbarns, ye wad maybe be rueing it the morn.' Then turning to the group of fishermen and peasants—'Now, sirs, wha will gie me a supper and some clean pease-strae?'

'I, and I, and I,' answered many a ready voice.

'Aweel, since sae it is, and I can only sleep in ae barn

at ance, I'll gae down wi' Saunders Mucklebackit—he has ay a soup o' something comfortable about his bigging—and, bairns, I'll maybe live to put ilka ane o' ye in mind some ither night that ye hae promised me quarters and my awmous', and away he went with the fisherman

Oldbuck laid the hand of strong possession on Lovel—'Deil a stride ye's go to Fairport this night, young man—you must go home with me to Monkbarns. Why, man, you have been a hero—a perfect Sir William Wallace, by all accounts. Come, my good lad, take hold of my arm, —I am not a prime support in such a wind—but Caxon shall help us out—here, you old idiot, come on the other side of me—And how the deil got you down to that infernal Bessy's Apron as they call it? Bess, said they? Why, curse her, she has spread out that vile pennon or banner of womankind, like all the rest of her sex, to allure her votaries to death and headlong ruin'

'I have been pretty well accustomed to climbing, and I have long observed fowlers practise that pass down the cliff'

'But how, in the name of all that is wonderful, came you to discover the danger of the pettish Baronet and his far more deserving daughter?'

'I saw them from the verge of the precipice.'

'From the verge!—umph—And what possessed you, *dumosa pendere procul de rupe?*—though *dumosa* is not the appropriate epithet—what the deil, man, tempted ye to the verge of the craig?'

'Why—I like to see the gathering and growling of a coming storm—or, in your own classical language, Mr Oldbuck, *suave mari magno*—and so forth—but here we reach the turn to Fairport I must wish you good-night'

'Not a step, not a pace, not an inch, not a shathmont, as I may say,—the meaning of which word has puzzled many that think themselves antiquaries. I am clear we should read *salmon-length* for *shathmont's-length*. You are aware that the space allotted for the passage of a salmon through a dam, dike, or weir, by statute is the length within which a full-grown pig can turn himself

round Now I have a scheme to prove, that, as terrestrial objects were thus appealed to for ascertaining submarine measurement, so it must be supposed that the productions of the water were established as gauges of the extent of land.—Shathmont—salmont—you see the close alliance of the sounds, dropping out two *h*'s, and a *t*, and assuming an *l*, makes the whole difference—I wish to Heaven no antiquarian derivation had demanded heavier concessions'

'But, my dear sir, I really must go home—I am wet to the skin'

'Shalt have my night-gown, man, and slippers, and catch the antiquarian rever as men do the plague, by wearing infected garments Nay, I know what you would be at—you are afraid to put the old bachelor to charges. But is there not the remains of that glorious chicken-pie—which, *meo arbitrio*, is better cold than hot—and that bottle of my oldest port, out of which the silly brain-sick Baronet (whom I cannot pardon, since he has escaped breaking his neck) had just taken one glass, when his infirm noddle went a wool-gathering after Gamelyn de Guardover?'

So saying, he dragged Lovel forward, till the Palmer's Port of Monkbarns received them Never, perhaps, had it admitted two pedestrians more needing rest; for Monkbarn's fatigue had been in a degree very contrary to his usual habits, and his more young and robust companion had that evening undergone agitation of mind which had harassed and wearied him even more than his extraordinary exertions of body.

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# ROBERT SOUTHEY

1774-1843

## THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

NELSON arrived off Cadiz on the 29th of September—his birthday. Fearing that, if the enemy knew his force, they might be deterred from venturing to sea, he kept out of sight of land, desired Collingwood to fire no salute, and hoist no colours; and wrote to Gibraltar, to request the force of the fleet might not be inserted there in the *Gazette*. His reception in the Mediterranean fleet was as gratifying as the farewell of his countrymen at Portsmouth: the officers who came on board to welcome him, forgot his rank as commander, in their joy at seeing him again. On the day of his arrival, Villeneuve received orders to put to sea the first opportunity. Villeneuve, however, hesitated, when he heard that Nelson had resumed the command. He called a council of war, and their determination was, that it would not be expedient to leave Cadiz, unless they had reason to believe themselves stronger by one-third than the British force. In the public measures of this country secrecy is seldom practicable, and seldomer attempted: here, however, by the precautions of Nelson, and the wise measures of the admiralty, the enemy were for once kept in ignorance; for as the ships appointed to reinforce the Mediterranean fleet were dispatched singly each as soon as it was ready—their collected number was not stated in the newspapers, and their arrival was not known to the enemy. But the enemy knew that Admiral Louis, with six sail, had been detached for stores and water to Gibraltar. Accident also contributed to make the French admiral doubt whether Nelson himself had actually taken the command. An American, lately arrived from England, maintained that it was impossible—for he had seen him only a few days before in London; and, at that time, there was no rumour of his going again to sea.

The station which Nelson had chosen was some fifty or

sixty miles to the west of Cadiz, near Cape St Mary's. At this distance he hoped to decoy the enemy out, while he guarded against the danger of being caught with a westerly wind near Cadiz, and driven within the Straits. The blockade of the port was rigorously enforced, in hopes that the combined fleet might be forced to sea by want. The Danish vessels, therefore, which were carrying provisions from the French ports in the bay, under the name of Danish property, to all the little ports from Ayamonte to Algeçiras, from whence they were conveyed in coasting boats to Cadiz, were seized. Without this proper exertion of power, the blockade would have been rendered nugatory, by the advantage thus taken of the neutral flag. The supplies from France were thus effectually cut off. There was now every indication that the enemy would speedily venture out; officers and men were in the highest spirits at the prospect of giving them a decisive blow; such, indeed, as would put an end to all further contest upon the seas. Theatrical amusements were performed every evening in most of the ships: and *God save the King* was the hymn with which the sports concluded. 'I verily believe,' said Nelson (writing on the 6th of October), 'that the country will soon be put to some expense on my account, either a monument, or a new pension and honours, for I have not the smallest doubt but that a very few days, almost hours, will put us in battle. The success no man can ensure: but for the fighting them, if they can be got at, I pledge myself. —The sooner the better: I don't like to have these things upon my mind.'

On the 9th, Nelson sent Collingwood what he called, in his diary, the Nelson-touch. 'I send you,' said he, 'my plan of attack, as far as a man dare venture to guess at the very uncertain position the enemy may be found in: but it is to place you perfectly at ease respecting my intentions, and to give full scope to your judgement for carrying them into effect. We can, my dear Coll, have no little jealousies. We have only one great object in view, that of annihilating our enemies, and getting a glorious peace for our country. No man has more confidence in

another than I have in you ; and no man will render your services more justice than your very old friend Nelson and Bronte ' The order of sailing was to be the order of battle . the fleet in two lines, with an advanced squadron of eight of the fastest sailing two-deckers. The second in command, having the entire direction of his line, was to break through the enemy, about the twelfth ship from their rear . he would lead through the centre, and the advanced squadron was to cut off three or four ahead of the centre This plan was to be adapted to the strength of the enemy, so that they should always be one-fourth superior to those whom they cut off. Nelson said, ' That his admirals and captains, knowing his precise object to be that of a close and decisive action, would supply any deficiency of signals, and act accordingly. In case signals cannot be seen or clearly understood, no captain can do wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.' One of the last orders of this admirable man was, that the name and family of every officer, seaman, and marine, who might be killed or wounded in action, should be, as soon as possible, returned to him, in order to be transmitted to the chairman of the patriotic fund, that the case might be taken into consideration, for the benefit of the sufferer, or his family

About half-past nine in the morning of the 19th, the *Mars*, being the nearest to the fleet of the ships which formed the line of communication with the frigates in shore, repeated the signal, that the enemy were coming out of port. The wind was at this time very light, with partial breezes, mostly from the S.S.W. Nelson ordered the signal to be made for a chase in the south-east quarter. About two, the repeating ships announced that the enemy were at sea. All night the British fleet continued under all sail, steering to the south-east At day-break they were in the entrance of the Straits, but the enemy were not in sight About seven, one of the frigates made signal that the enemy were bearing north Upon this the *Victory* hove to ; and shortly afterwards Nelson made sail again to the northward In the afternoon the wind blew fresh from the south-west, and the English

began to fear that the foe might be forced to return to port. A little before sunset, however, Blackwood, in the *Euryalus*, telegraphed, that they appeared determined to go to the westward—'And that,' said the admiral, in his diary, 'they shall not do, if it is in the power of Nelson and Bronte to prevent them' Nelson had signified to Blackwood, that he depended upon him to keep sight of the enemy. They were observed so well, that all their motions were made known to him, and, as they wore twice, he inferred that they were aiming to keep the port of Cadiz open, and would retreat there as soon as they saw the British fleet. for this reason he was very careful not to approach near enough to be seen by them during the night. At daybreak the combined fleets were distinctly seen from the *Victory's* deck, formed in a close line of battle ahead, on the starboard tack, about twelve miles to leeward, and standing to the south. Our fleet consisted of twenty-seven sail of the line, and four frigates, theirs of thirty-three, and seven large frigates. Their superiority was greater in size, and weight of metal, than in numbers. They had four thousand troops on board, and the best riflemen who could be procured, many of them Tyrolese, were dispersed through the ships. Little did the Tyrolese, and little did the Spaniards, at that day, imagine what horrors the wicked tyrant whom they served was preparing for their country.

Soon after daylight Nelson came upon deck. The 21st of October was a festival in his family, because on that day his uncle, Captain Suckling, in the *Dreadnought*, with two other line-of-battle ships, had beaten off a French squadron of four sail of the line, and three frigates. Nelson, with that sort of superstition from which few persons are entirely exempt, had more than once expressed his persuasion that this was to be the day of his battle also; and he was well pleased at seeing his prediction about to be verified. The wind was now from the west, light breezes, with a long heavy swell. Signal was made to bear down upon the enemy in two lines; and the fleet set all sail. Collingwood, in the *Royal Sovereign*, led the lee line of thirteen ships, the *Victory* led the

weather line of fourteen. Having seen that all was as it should be, Nelson retired to his cabin, and wrote the following prayer :

‘ May the great God, whom I worship, grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory, and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it ; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet ! For myself individually, I commit my life to Him that made me ; and may His blessing alight on my endeavours for serving my country faithfully ! To Him I resign myself, and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen Amen ! Amen ! ’

Blackwood went on board the *Victory* about six . He found him in good spirits, but very calm ; not in that exhilaration which he had felt upon entering into battle at Aboukir and Copenhagen . he knew that his own life would be particularly aimed at, and seems to have looked for death with almost as sure an expectation as for victory. His whole attention was fixed upon the enemy. They tacked to the northward, and formed their line on the larboard tack , thus bringing the shoals of Trafalgar and St. Pedro under the lee of the British, and keeping the port of Cadiz open for themselves . This was judiciously done and Nelson, aware of all the advantages which it gave them, made signal to prepare to anchor.

Valleneuve was a skilful seaman . worthy of serving a better master, and a better cause . His plan of defence was as well conceived, and as original, as the plan of attack. He formed the fleet in a double line , every alternate ship being about a cable’s length to windward of her second ahead and astern. Nelson, certain of a triumphant issue to the day, asked Blackwood what he should consider as a victory . That officer answered, that, considering the handsome way in which battle was offered by the enemy, their apparent determination for a fair trial of strength, and the situation of the land, he thought it would be a glorious result if fourteen were captured. He replied ‘ I shall not be satisfied with less than twenty.’ Soon afterwards he asked him, if he did not



think there was a signal wanting. Capt Blackwood made answer, that he thought the whole fleet seemed very clearly to understand what they were about. These words were scarcely spoken before that signal was made, which will be remembered as long as the language, or even the memory, of England shall endure ; Nelson's last signal ' ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY ! ' It was received throughout the fleet with a shout of answering acclamation, made sublime by the spirit which it breathed, and the feeling which it expressed ' Now,' said Lord Nelson, ' I can do no more. We must trust to the great Disposer of all events, and the justice of our cause. I thank God for this great opportunity of doing my duty.'

He wore that day, as usual, his admiral's frock coat, bearing on the left breast four stars, of the different orders with which he was invested. Ornaments which rendered him so conspicuous a mark for the enemy, were beheld with ominous apprehensions by his officers. It was known that there were riflemen on board the French ships ; and it could not be doubted but that his life would be particularly aimed at. They communicated their fears to each other, and the surgeon, Mr Beatty, spoke to the chaplain, Dr Scott, and to Mr Scott, the public secretary, desiring that some person would entreat him to change his dress, or cover the stars ; but they knew that such a request would highly displease him. ' In honour I gained them,' he had said, when such a thing had been hinted to him formerly, ' and in honour I will die with them ' Mr. Beatty, however, would not have been deterred by any fear of exciting his displeasure, from speaking to him himself upon a subject in which the weal of England, as well as the life of Nelson, was concerned—but he was ordered from the deck before he could find an opportunity. This was a point upon which Nelson's officers knew that it was hopeless to remonstrate or reason with him ; but both Blackwood, and his own captain, Hardy, represented to him how advantageous to the fleet it would be for him to keep out of action as long as possible ; and he consented at last to let the *Leviathan*

and the *Téméraire*, which were sailing abreast of the *Victory*, be ordered to pass ahead. Yet even here the last infirmity of this noble mind was indulged, for these ships could not pass ahead if the *Victory* continued to carry all her sail; and so far was Nelson from shortening sail, that it was evident he took pleasure in pressing on, and rendering it impossible for them to obey his own orders. A long swell was setting into the bay of Cadiz: our ships, crowding all sail, moved majestically before it, with light winds from the south-west. The sun shone on the sails of the enemy; and their well-formed line, with their numerous three-deckers, made an appearance which any other assailants would have thought formidable, but the British sailors only admired the beauty and the splendour of the spectacle; and, in full confidence of winning what they saw, remarked to each other, what a fine sight yonder ships would make at Spithead!

The French admiral, from the *Bucentaure*, beheld the new manner in which his enemy was advancing—Nelson and Collingwood each leading his line; and pointing them out to his officers, he is said to have exclaimed, that such conduct could not fail to be successful. Yet Villeneuve had made his own dispositions with the utmost skill, and the fleets under his command waited for the attack with perfect coolness. Ten minutes before twelve they opened their fire. Eight or nine of the ships immediately ahead of the *Victory*, and across her bows, fired single guns at her, to ascertain whether she was yet within their range. As soon as Nelson perceived that their shot passed over him, he desired Blackwood, and Capt Prowse, of the *Sirius*, to repair to their respective frigates; and, on their way, to tell all the captains of the line-of-battle ships that he depended on their exertions, and that if by the prescribed mode of attack they found it impracticable to get into action immediately, they might adopt whatever they thought best, provided it led them quickly and closely alongside an enemy. As they were standing on the front of the poop, Blackwood took him by the hand, saying, he hoped soon to return and find him in possession of twenty prizes. He replied,

'God bless you, Blackwood, I shall never see you again.'

Nelson's column was steered about two points more to the north than Collingwood's, in order to cut off the enemy's escape into Cadiz: the lee line, therefore, was first engaged. 'See,' cried Nelson, pointing to the *Royal Sovereign*, as she steered right for the centre of the enemy's line, cut through it astern of the *Santa Anna*, three-decker, and engaged her at the muzzle of her guns on the starboard side. 'see how that noble fellow, Collingwood, carries his ship into action!' Collingwood, delighted at being first in the heat of the fire, and knowing the feelings of his commander and old friend, turned to his captain, and exclaimed: 'Rotherham, what would Nelson give to be here!' Both these brave officers, perhaps, at this moment thought of Nelson with gratitude, for a circumstance which had occurred on the preceding day? Admiral Collingwood, with some of the captains, having gone on board the *Victory*, to receive instructions, Nelson inquired of him, where his captain was? and was told, in reply, that they were not upon good terms with each other. 'Terms!' said Nelson, 'good terms with each other!' Immediately he sent a boat for Captain Rotherham; led him, as soon as he arrived, to Collingwood, and saying, 'Look; yonder are the enemy!' bade them shake hands like Englishmen.

The enemy continued to fire a gun at a time at the *Victory*, till they saw that a shot had passed through her main-top-gallant sail, then they opened their broadsides, aiming chiefly at her rigging, in the hope of disabling her before she could close with them. Nelson, as usual, had hoisted several flags, lest one should be shot away. The enemy showed no colours till late in the action, when they began to feel the necessity of having them to strike. For this reason, the *Santissima Trinidad*, Nelson's old acquaintance, as he used to call her, was distinguishable only by her four decks; and to the bow of this opponent he ordered the *Victory* to be steered. Meantime an incessant raking fire was kept up upon the *Victory*. The admiral's secretary was one of the first who

fell ; he was killed by a cannon-shot while conversing with Hardy. Capt. Adair of the marines, with the help of a sailor, endeavoured to remove the body from Nelson's sight, who had a great regard for Mr Scott ; but he anxiously asked ' Is that poor Scott that's gone ? ' and being informed that it was indeed so, exclaimed ' Poor fellow ! ' Presently, a double-headed shot struck a party of marines, who were drawn up on the poop, and killed eight of them ; upon which Nelson immediately desired Capt Adair to disperse his men round the ship, that they might not suffer so much from being together. A few minutes afterwards a shot struck the fore-brace bits on the quarter-deck, and passed between Nelson and Hardy, a splinter from the bit tearing off Hardy's buckle, and bruising his foot. Both stopped, and looked anxiously at each other, each supposed the other to be wounded. Nelson then smiled, and said, ' This is too warm work, Hardy, to last long.'

The *Victory* had not yet returned a single gun ; fifty of her men had been by this time killed or wounded, and her main-top-mast, with all her studding sails and her booms, shot away. Nelson declared, that, in all his battles, he had seen nothing which surpassed the cool courage of his crew on this occasion. At four minutes after twelve, she opened her fire from both sides of her deck. It was not possible to break the enemy's line without running on board one of their ships : Hardy informed him of this, and asked him which he would prefer. Nelson replied ' Take your choice, Hardy, it does not signify much.' The master was ordered to put the helm to port, and the *Victory* ran on board the *Redoubtable*, just as her tiller ropes were shot away. The French ship received her with a broadside ; then instantly let down her lower deck ports, for fear of being boarded through them and never afterwards fired a great gun during the action. Her tops, like those of all the enemy's ships, were filled with riflemen. Nelson never placed musketry in his tops ; he had a strong dislike to the practice ; not merely because it endangers setting fire to the sails, but also because it is a murderous sort of warfare, by which

individuals may suffer, and a commander now and then be picked off, but which never can decide the fate of a general engagement

Captain Harvey, in the *Téméraire*, fell on board the *Redoubtable* on the other side. Another enemy was in like manner on board the *Téméraire*, so that these four ships formed as compact a tier as if they had been moored together, their heads lying all the same way. The lieutenants of the *Victory*, seeing this, depressed their guns of the middle and lower decks, and fired with a diminished charge, lest the shot should pass through, and injure the *Téméraire*. And because there was danger that the *Redoubtable* might take fire from the lower-deck guns, the muzzles of which touched her side when they were run out, the fireman of each gun stood ready with a bucket of water, which, as soon as the gun was discharged, he dashed into the hole made by the shot. An incessant fire was kept up from the *Victory* from both sides, her larboard guns playing upon the *Bucentaure* and the huge *Santissima Trinidad*.

It had been part of Nelson's prayer, that the British fleet might be distinguished by humanity in the victory which he expected. Setting an example himself, he twice gave orders to cease firing upon the *Redoubtable*, supposing that she had struck, because her great guns were silent; for, as she carried no flag, there was no means of instantly ascertaining the fact. From this ship, which he had thus twice spared, he received his death. A ball fired from her mizen-top, which, in the then situation of the two vessels, was not more than fifteen yards from that part of the deck where he was standing, struck the epaulette on his left shoulder, about a quarter after one, just in the heat of action. He fell upon his face, on the spot which was covered with his poor secretary's blood. Hardy, who was a few steps from him, turning round, saw three men raising him up. 'They have done for me at last, Hardy,' said he. 'I hope not,' cried Hardy. 'Yes!' he replied; 'my back-bone is shot through.' Yet even now, not for a moment losing his presence of mind, he observed, as they were carrying him down the ladder, that the tiller

ropes, which had been shot away, were not yet replaced, and ordered that new ones should be rove immediately : then, that he might not be seen by the crew, he took out his handkerchief, and covered his face and his stars. Had he but concealed these badges of honour from the enemy, England, perhaps would not have had cause to receive with sorrow the news of the battle of Trafalgar. The cockpit was crowded with wounded and dying men, over whose bodies he was with some difficulty conveyed, and laid upon a pallet in the midshipmen's berth. It was soon perceived, upon examination, that the wound was mortal. This, however, was concealed from all except Capt. Hardy, the chaplain, and the medical attendants. He himself being certain, from the sensation in his back, and the gush of blood he felt momentarily within his breast, that no human care could avail him, insisted that the surgeon should leave him, and attend to those to whom he might be useful, 'for,' said he, 'you can do nothing for me.' All that could be done was to fan him with paper, and frequently to give him lemonade to alleviate his intense thirst. He was in great pain, and expressed much anxiety for the event of the action, which now began to declare itself. As often as a ship struck, the crew of the *Victory* hurraed, and at every hurra, a visible expression of joy gleamed in the eyes, and marked the countenance of the dying hero. But he became impatient to see Capt. Hardy ; and as that officer, though often sent for, could not leave the deck, Nelson feared that some fatal cause prevented him, and repeatedly cried : ' Will no one bring Hardy to me ? He must be killed ! He is surely dead ! ' An hour and ten minutes elapsed from the time when Nelson received his wound, before Hardy could come to him. They shook hands in silence ; Hardy in vain struggling to suppress the feelings of that most painful and yet sublimest moment. ' Well, Hardy,' said Nelson, ' how goes the day with us ? ' ' Very well,' replied Hardy, ' ten ships have struck, but five of the van have tacked, and show an intention to bear down upon the *Victory*. I have called two or three of our fresh ships round, and have no doubt of giving

them a drubbing.' 'I hope,' said Nelson, 'none of our ships have struck?' Hardy answered, 'There was no fear of that.' Then, and not till then, Nelson spoke of himself. 'I am a dead man, Hardy,' said he: 'I am going fast: it will be all over with me soon.' Hardy observed, that he hoped Mr Beatty could yet hold out some prospect of life. 'Oh no!' he replied. 'it is impossible. My back is shot through. Beatty will tell you so.' Capt Hardy then, once more, shook hands with him; and, with a heart almost bursting, hastened upon deck.

By this time all feeling below the breast was gone, and Nelson, having made the surgeon ascertain this, said to him 'You know I am gone, I know it. I feel something rising in my breast'—putting his hand on his left side—'which tells me so.' And upon Beatty's inquiring whether his pain was very great? he replied, 'So great, that he wished he was dead. Yet,' said he, in a lower voice, 'one would like to live a little longer too!' Capt. Hardy, some fifty minutes after he had left the cockpit, returned, and, again taking the hand of his dying friend and commander, congratulated him on having gained a complete victory. How many of the enemy were taken he did not know, as it was impossible to perceive them distinctly; but fourteen or fifteen at least. 'That's well,' cried Nelson, 'but I bargained for twenty.' And then, in a stronger voice, he said: 'Anchor, Hardy, anchor.' Hardy, upon this, hinted that Admiral Collingwood would take upon himself the direction of affairs. 'Not while I live, Hardy,' said the dying Nelson, ineffectually endeavouring to raise himself from the bed. 'Do you anchor.' His previous order for preparing to anchor had shown how clearly he foresaw the necessity of this. Presently, calling Hardy back, he said to him in a low voice, 'Don't throw me overboard' and he desired that he might be buried by his parents, unless it should please the king to order otherwise. Then, 'Kiss me, Hardy,' said he. Hardy knelt down and kissed his cheek. and Nelson said, 'Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my duty.' Hardy stood over him in silence for a moment or two, then knelt again and kissed

his forehead. 'Who is that?' said Nelson; and being informed, he replied, 'God bless you, Hardy.' And Hardy then left him—for ever

Nelson now desired to be turned upon his right side, and said, 'I wish I had not left the deck; for I shall soon be gone' Death was, indeed, rapidly approaching. He said to the chaplain, 'Doctor, I have *not* been a *great* sinner.' His articulation now became difficult; but he was distinctly heard to say, 'Thank God, I have done my duty.' These words he repeatedly pronounced, and they were the last words which he uttered. He expired at thirty minutes after four—three hours and a quarter after he had received his wound

Within a quarter of an hour after Nelson was wounded, above fifty of the *Victory's* men fell by the enemy's musketry. They, however, on their part, were not idle; and it was not long before there were only two Frenchmen left alive in the mizen-top of the *Redoutable*. One of them was the man who had given the fatal wound—he did not live to boast of what he had done. An old quarter-master had seen him fire; and easily recognized him, because he wore a glazed cocked hat and a white frock. This quarter-master and two midshipmen, Mr Collingwood and Mr. Pollard, were the only persons left in the *Victory's* poop; the two midshipmen kept firing at the top, and he supplied them with cartridges. One of the Frenchmen, attempting to make his escape down the rigging, was shot by Mr Pollard, and fell on the poop. But the old quarter-master as he cried out, 'That's he—that's he,' and pointed at the other, who was coming forward to fire again, received a shot in his mouth, and fell dead. Both the midshipmen then fired at the same time, and the fellow dropped in the top. When they took possession of the prize, they went into the mizen-top, and found him dead, with one ball through his head, and another through his breast

The *Redoutable* struck within twenty minutes after the fatal shot had been fired from her. During that time she had been twice on fire—in her fore-chains and in her fore-castle. The French, as they had done in other battles,



made use in this, of fire-balls and other combustibles ; implements of destruction which other nations, from a sense of honour and humanity, have laid aside ; which add to the sufferings of the wounded, without determining the issue of the combat : which none but the cruel would employ and which never can be successful against the brave. Once they succeeded in setting fire, from the *Redoutable*, to some ropes and canvas on the *Victory's* booms. The cry ran through the ship, and reached the cockpit but even this dreadful cry produced no confusion. the men displayed that perfect self-possession in danger by which English seamen are characterized ; they extinguished the flames on board their own ship, and then hastened to extinguish them in the enemy, by throwing buckets of water from the gangway. When the *Redoutable* had struck, it was not practicable to board her from the *Victory*, for, though the two ships touched, the upper works of both fell in so much, that there was a great space between their gangways, and she could not be boarded from the lower or middle decks, because her ports were down. Some of our men went to Lieutenant Quilliam, and offered to swim under her bows, and get up there ; but it was thought unfit to hazard brave lives in this manner.

What our men would have done from gallantry, some of the crew of the *Santissima Trinidad* did to save themselves. Unable to stand the tremendous fire of the *Victory*, whose larboard guns played against this great four-decker, and not knowing how else to escape them, nor where else to betake themselves for protection, many of them leaped overboard, and swam to the *Victory* ; and were actually helped up her sides by the English during the action. The Spaniards began the battle with less vivacity than their unworthy allies, but they continued it with greater firmness. The *Argonauta* and *Bahama* were defended till they had each lost about four hundred men, the *San Juan Nepomuceno* lost three hundred and fifty. Often as the superiority of British courage has been proved against France upon the seas, it was never more conspicuous than in this decisive conflict. Five

of our ships were engaged muzzle to muzzle with five of the French. In all five the Frenchmen lowered their lower-deck ports, and deserted their guns, while our men continued deliberately to load and fire, till they had made the victory secure.

Once, amidst his sufferings, Nelson had expressed a wish that he were dead, but immediately the spirit subdued the pangs of death; and he wished to live a little longer, doubtless that he might hear the completion of the victory which he had seen so gloriously begun. That consolation—that joy—that triumph, was afforded him. He lived to know that the victory was decisive, and the last guns which were fired at the flying enemy were heard a minute or two before he expired.

From Southey's *Life of Nelson*.

## EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

1792-1881

### A TIGER HUNT

‘**B**UT hunting lions on foot,’ continued De Ruyter, ‘or lions hunting by themselves, is a noble sight, as I once witnessed. Unlike the crouching and dastardly tiger, they do not lie in ambush to surprise their prey at night, but take the field with the dawn—drag cover, and give chase to the first animal that breaks it, be it what it may, while the forest trembles with their thundering voices. I had been to meet a prince of the family of Bulmar Singh, near Rhotuk, in the neighbourhood of which I was detained some days, attended by a small body of followers, with half a dozen of the little mountain-elephants, on a march towards Kamoon, the country of the Himalaya Mountains, inhabited by a wild race called Sikhs. We went by secret and circuitous paths through an immense tract of country, covered with forest trees and jungle. I never lived so long without seeing the sun as when toiling through that dreary world of shade. Not a ray could have penetrated it since the creation. Even the winds, wandering vagrants as they are, could find no entrance there. In that everlasting twilight, great owls and vampire-bats gambolled about all day long, like swallows in spring. The birds and beasts, which were very few, lacked their natural dyes to distinguish them, all partaking of the monotonous hue of the yellow, mossy, and mouldy trees and plants. Fauns, hares, foxes, and jackals were of a brindled gray. There were toad-stools and fungi grouped in knots, which in colour and size so closely resembled lions couching with their cubs, that we, knowing they abounded there, prepared to defend ourselves. Parasitical creepers, gasping, like myself, for air, had plunged their wiry roots in the deep, dingy, vegetable soil, till their trunks swelled to the bulk

of the teak tree, up which they had climbed to redden their heads and spread their scarlet flowers in the sun ; then as if to monopolize all, they extended themselves on the tops of the highest trees, fanned by the air, and basking in sunshine. Oh, how I envied them !

‘ You have seen this on a smaller scale imagine, then, my delight when I, accustomed from my youth to a boundless expanse of sea and sky, left this gloomy twilight, and burst from the belt of death—for so it is properly named—into broad, open, unobscured light. I blinked like the owl in the sun, shouted in ecstasy, and respired the free air as you did when you emerged from your plunge off the frigate’s yard-arm. The scene looked like a lake fenced by a forest To the east, the mountains arose to a stupendous height they bordered the Chinese empire There was a clear stream winding through this narrow and beautiful valley After crossing it, we came to the bed of a mountain-torrent, deep, and of great breadth, but at that time dry, with the exception of a few pools of water In the middle of this bed of gravel, interspersed with pieces of rock, was a small island formed by a rock, and enlarged by fragments which had been brought down by the torrent, and which adhered to it in natural arches, overgrown with moss, flowers, and shrubs. The security of the position, added to its beauty, tempted us to make it our place of halt and repose. I was then young and romantic as you are, and, after passing through the dreary gloom of the forest, thought I could have dwelt there all my life. The night was clear and bright, and long before it was day, I was up smoking my callian, and planning a shooting bungalow

‘ The transition from night to day came on so gently, that I did not notice it, yet, in the forest, I could see it was midnight A herd of wild buffaloes, the largest I had ever seen, came out to graze within a little more than musket-shot from us Suddenly I sprang on my feet at hearing a confused noise, like the rumbling of a thunderstorm, or distant guns at sea. The woods seemed in motion ; jackals, foxes, and dappled deer came bounding out of the forest, the herd of black buffaloes

ceased to graze, and turned towards the place whence the noise proceeded. A large flock of glittering peacocks, and other birds, flew screaming over our heads. A pelican that I had watched making prize of a snake, dropped it within a yard of my feet, and flew away. Our little wire-haired elephants, feeding on the shrubs beneath us, looked terrified, and their keepers left them, and crawled up the rocks. I watched the opening in the dark forest which was half screened by thick and thorny bushes, when presently a mohr of the elk-kind burst cover, and, with one long, magnificent bound, appeared in the plain. In his stature he was far beyond those which are known in Europe, and his twisted horns were long as that Malay's spear. At the same instant, a single, clear, deep, terrific roar, like a burst of thunder, announced the hunting lion. He forced his way through bush and briar, with his nose to the ground, followed by four others. On entering the plain, he seemed for some moments endeavouring to catch the scent in silence, his nose always to the ground. Having, as it appeared, hit it, he again gave a roar, which was now echoed by all the others, and, pursuing the track of the stag, he started off at a long gallop, the rest following close in a line at his heels. I remarked, if any of them attempted to break the line, or pass him, he checked them with his voice, which became deeper and more growling.

'The elk, taking the upper ground, went at an eagle's speed along the margin of the river, leaving the lions far behind. In attempting to leap the river from a ledge of rock, the opposite bank gave way, and he rolled in; then, wading down, he stopped an instant, as if to breathe and brace his limbs, the voices of the lions now in full chorus nearing him. He ascended a slope, and, crossing, came towards us in the deep, dry channel of the torrent.

'I should have observed that the leading lion, when he passed through the herd of buffaloes, took no other notice of them than as they appeared to have puzzled him in regaining the scent of the stag. The buffaloes stood their ground, without budging to make way for the lions, as if fearless of attack; and my guides assured

me these animals are more than a match for the fiercest lion, and that any one of them could kill two or three tigers. However that may be, as the lion passed through the line of these huge oxen, his grisly and erect mane, and shaggy tail, waved above them. It was clear he hunted by scent, and not by sight. Instead of crossing the river in the nearest direction to where the stag now was, he nosed him to the spot where he had leaped, then wading to the opposite bank where the stag had fallen, he also followed the course of the stream, ascended the slope, and, ever in track of his prey, crossed into the torrent's bed.

'In all probability the poor stag had received some injury from his fall. His speed decreased, whilst that of the lions was augmented, and their voices grew louder as they neared the chase. The stag had passed the rocky ledge on which I stood, soon followed by the full pack. I had a good view of them. The first was an old gaunt brute, his black skin shining through his thin, starred, reddish hair, his tail was bare and dragged, and the hair on his mane was clotted together, his eyes looked dim and bloodshot, his huge lower jaw was down, and his tongue hung out like a wearied dog's. He, however, kept the lead, followed by a lioness, and three male cubs, almost fully grown. The stag now made attempts to ascend the bank, as if to regain the jungle; but the loose shingle gave way, and he lost much ground. He seemed also, as the chase gained on him, to be panic-struck by their roars, and, again falling when he had ascended three parts of the steep acclivity, he was unable to rise. The roaring of the lions was magnificent, as the head one, erecting his mane, and lashing his sides with his tail, bounded in on him with a mighty spring. Then with one paw on his body, he growled the others off, and leisurely began his breakfast, his family stealing aside with limbs and fragments which he tore away and scattered about.

'But here comes our wild Malay chieftain; so finish your coffee, and let us be moving to the city of kings—or of wild beasts—for they are too often the same. What glorious sport it would be, to hunt tigers with the souls of tyrants within them!'

As we approached the hill, there was an undulating ground, the soil red, with low jungle, bearing red and yellow berries in profusion. Bustards, large flocks of cranes, herons, and sea-birds were in the air. Jackals, foxes, and several animals I had not seen before, crossed our path. We had glimpses of herds of wild elephants and buffaloes, grazing on the plain we had passed. At noon we were stopped by a river, broad, muddy, and shallow, which doubtless floods the upper plain during the rainy season, that is, for seven or eight months during the year, it then must force a passage into the morass below. After being a long time detained, the elephants forded it, when we rested for the night; or rather we did not rest, for we were so tormented with stinging vermin that none of us could sleep. The next day we ascended (as it is called) the Haunted Hill; which the natives hold in such superstitious awe, that, in all probability, we were, for centuries, the first who had disturbed the hallowed precincts of ogres and spirits, confidently reported to reside there. Remnants indeed there were of a city of some sort. De Ruyter said they were Moorish. There were large masses of stone, choked-up tanks, and indications of where wells had once been, but almost entirely concealed by thick bushes, dank weeds, creepers, and other vegetation, flourishing in profusion. Wherever it was penetrable, it bore the footprints of so many wild animals, that there was enough to check the hitherto insatiable thirst of dry and musty antiquaries.

We pitched our tents on a rocky part of the hill free from jungle, lighted fires, roasted a young stag, commenced arrangements for the morrow's sport, and slept. Before the dawn, the restless Malay chieftain was calling up his followers, and preparing the elephants, of which he had six. Soon after it was light, every thing was in readiness, and we set forward. Zela, who insisted on accompanying us, was mounted on her small elephant, and engaged in the only covered howdah, ours being all open. We beat about in vain, for though we met with tiger's footmarks in many of the open places, near pools of standing water, the high grass and thick bushes pre-

vented our tracing them to cover. We found, however, abundance of smaller game; deer, wild hogs, and a variety of birds. De Ruyter having carefully surveyed the neighbourhood, came in at night, and told us he had tracked three tigers to a thick jungle, near which he had found the bones of an elk-deer, recently killed by them.

With this promise of sport, we started in the morning in great glee, and, as we thought, well prepared for the attack. After riding about two miles, we descended to the plain, and came to an exceedingly thick jungle, with thorny bushes and canes. Around us was the plain covered with very high jungle grass, and dank weeds, with bushes scattered here and there, but few timber trees. De Ruyter conducted us to the spot where he had discovered the stag's bones, surrounded by moist and torn-up earth, and trampled grass; thence we had no difficulty in tracing the tigers' huge paws into the patch of jungle. Here De Ruyter divided our party, so as to block up the only apparently accessible outlets, made by wild beasts, and by these openings we were to enter. The greater proportion of our party was on foot, and seemingly as unconcerned as if going in to hunt weasels. I left Zela, seated in her howdah, at the opening of the wood, guarded by four of her own Arabs.

De Ruyter and myself dismounted to clear a passage; the Malays were divided into two parties, and we were backed by our sailors, whom we cautioned to be careful in the use of their fire-arms, as more was to be feared from accidents with them, than from the tigers. De Ruyter expressed great doubts of our elephants facing the tiger, but it was necessary to try them. In our progress towards the bushes we turned out many deer, hares, and wild cats. We saw also rums, said to be those of a Moorish palace. Nothing but the sagacity of the elephants could have steered us clear of broken masses of buildings, chasms, and wells overgrown with dank verdure. It was a wild and haunted-looking place, which awed even the sailors in their boisterous mirth, and silenced the ribaldry and obscene threatening of the Malays. The low trumpeting sound and foot-stamping



of our elephants gave notice that the tiger's den was near. A vaulted ruin was before us, there was a rustling amongst the bushes; De Ruyter said, 'Be steady, my lads!' and a tiger, the first I had ever faced, finding his passage blocked up, charged us. We fired together, I know not with what effect; for both our elephants slued round, and ran away wild with fear. My mahout threw himself off, and a branch of a tree struck me off. I heard a tremendous war-whoop, and fire kept up on all sides. De Ruyter's elephant fell into a half-choked well; but, with his wonted self-possession, he extricated himself.

Leaving the elephants to their fate, we determined not to lose the sport. De Ruyter thought there were more tigers in the den, and we went on foot to drive them out. We got some of the men together, and proceeded to the spot, to which we were directed by the abominable stench and the dried bones scattered about. The bushes were cleared away, and we heard, as we drew near, back to back, forcing our way onwards, low muttering growls and sharp snarls. 'Stand close!' exclaimed De Ruyter; 'there is a tigress with her whelps,—have a care;—don't fire, my lads, till she breaks cover, and fire low.'

A whelp, three parts grown, first came forth to charge us. De Ruyter, expecting the old one would follow, reserved his fire, and cautioned me to do the same. The whelp looked frightened, and slunk away, crouching under a thick bush, where it remained snarling; and thither the other whelps followed. The mother's growl became terrific; a shot at one of the whelps brought her out, lashing her sides, and foaming with rage. She rushed right on us, I fired both barrels; we then retreated a few paces. The wounded brute staggered after us, and when rising to spring, De Ruyter, who had still reserved his fire, shot her right through the heart. While I was charging my gun, one of the whelps, already wounded, drove against me, and knocked me down; when De Ruyter, with as much coolness as if he had been pigeon-shooting, put his rifle to its ear, and almost blew its head off. Meantime the sailors kept up a fire, till the balls were flying about our heads, on the remaining whelps, which

were stealing away wounded 'Let us stand behind this rock,' said De Ruyter, 'a sailor uses a musket as he does a nose—he bears down all before him.'

A Malay came from the chieftain to tell us the other part of the jungle was alive with tigers—that they had already killed two, and that one of their men was dead.

There was now as much noise and confusion as in a naval battle, or at the sacking of a city. I observed, however, that tigers were not such formidable opponents as I had imagined. They lay close and crouching in the long grass, or under the bushes, and were as difficult to get up as cats or quail. It generally required a shot to move them, then they always essayed every means of escape through the thickest cover; and it was only when finding every passage blocked up, and smarting from wounds, that they rushed blindly and madly on their pursuers, forced by despair, like a cat or a rat. With nerve and self-possession, two men with double-barrelled guns would have little to fear, and might boldly go up to the mouth of the den of a tiger. This piece of thick jungle, interspersed with caverns, rocks, and runs, plenty of water near, a great plain covered with high jungle-grass, and well supplied with a diversity of smaller animals to prey upon, was a favoured abode for tigers; and had they been endowed with reason, they could not have selected a spot on the island so admirably adapted for their residence, while their number and size indicated how well they thrived there. A great many escaped on the plain, where it was impossible to follow them. Several of our men were badly mauled by them, and more by falls: one of the Malays had his spine so injured, that he died in great agony.

Uneasy at my long absence from Zela, I went alone (for all our people were scattered) to the entrance of the wood, where I had left her guarded. As I approached the place, I was alarmed at a mingled noise of tigers, elephants, and screaming voices. I hastened on as fast as the thick cover and broken ground would permit. The fierce snarlings of tigers became louder. I passed the spot where I had left Zela, burst through the cover wildly with terror, and, on

getting to the open space, beheld a monstrous tiger on the back of her elephant, clinging with his huge claws on the howdah, gnashing his teeth, roaring and foaming with rage. Zela not visible, methought he had devoured her ! I struck my head with my clenched hand, exclaiming, ' Fool ! fool ! ' and for a moment staggered unnerved, while a deathlike sickness came over me ! It was but a moment my blood renewed its course through my veins like flame ! My carbine not being charged, I cast it from me, and, armed with nothing but a long Malayan creese, fierce and fearless, I rushed by a half-grown limping tiger-whelp, whining and gnawing at something, which I passed unheedingly. The elephant was stamping, squealing, and struggling desperately to shake off his enemy. The grisly tiger fell, but within his gripe he held a human victim, bent up, and enveloped in a white cotton garment, such as Zela wore. As I came within a few paces of the tiger, holding his victim down with a paw upon his breast, he glared ferociously on me. While I was rushing in on him, a voice above me, faint and tremulous, said, ' Oh, Prophet, guard him ! ' I heard no more—I was madly striking out my arm, to plunge the weapon in the tiger's throat, while he was in the act of springing on me. The elephant, as if Zela's prayer had been heard, struck the tiger, while his eye was fixed on me, with his hind foot, sent him reeling many paces, and, ere he could recover, I had plunged my creese up to the hilt in his body. A loud shout, drowning the cries of tiger, elephant, and all others, now burst on my ear, and the Malay chieftain came up, in good time, for so tenacious of life is the tiger, that he was still enabled to strike me down with his paw, and as the whelp had come on me, I should have been torn to pieces, but for the chieftain's timely aid. He thrust his spear through the whelp, and buried his dagger twenty times in the body of the tiger ; then, dragging the lifeless brute from above me, he helped me up, and said, ' Yes, this is very good amusement—I like it ! Let's go into the jungle again—there are plenty more of them, and we'll kill them all ! ' Upon which, roaring like a lion, and reeking with sweat

and blood, he shook his spear, and darted into the wood again.

My wild and vacant eye fortunately fell on the form of Zela, who was clinging speechless at my feet, or I should have died or gone mad. I endeavoured to raise her, but my strength had left me. I staggered and fell, clasping her, when for a time I was almost insensible. Recovering, I beheld her safe, saw the dead bodies of the tigers, and found all was quiet near us.

'What is that?' I asked, pointing to the bundle of white rags which lay close at my feet.

'That, dearest, is the poor mahout—I fear he is dead!'

'Oh, is it only he?' I thought it had been you, and that you were now but a spirit, my elected good one; for you know, by my new Arab creed, I am allowed two, a good one and a bad one

My rage was presently directed against Zela's Arabs, who made their appearance from the bushes whither they had been lured by the cubs of a leopard, one of which they had secured, De Ruyter having shot the dam. I was infuriated at these fellows for having put Zela's life in jeopardy, and gave chase to one, with the determination of shooting him. My pistol was pointed at his breast, and I was in the act of pulling the trigger, when a hand struck up my arm, and the pistol was discharged in the air. I turned round, prepared to fell the intruder with the heavy-capped butt-end of the weapon, when the eye of Zela met mine with a glance that penetrated my breast, and would have restored my reason, had I been mad. In her low piercing accents, she said—

'He is our foster-brother; our milk was the same, so must be our blood. Let us not destroy each other. Has not the Prophet, this day, saved the remnant of our father's house? It is the evil spirit, which pursued my father to his death, that hath now descended on you! His hand is on your heart; beware lest it should be turned to stone. His shadow is hanging over you, like a cloud over the sun, and makes you appear as black, and fierce, and unforgiving as himself!'

'You are our Malay's hawk, I suppose, but the black

shadow of the raven's wing is vanished—the sun is unobscured—the ill-omened bird has left me ! I must to the jungle again. What can have become of De Ruyter ? Come, mount your elephant . I would rather entrust you to him, than leave you girt round by a thousand Arabs . He is a noble beast ' .

Going up to him, I gave Zeïa some bread and fruit that she might feed him. He seemed abstracted in gloomy contemplation, and gazed with more than human sympathy on the prostrate body of the dying mahout. He noticed us not ; and as his eye fell on the dead tiger, he stamped, looked fierce, and made a trumpeting noise, as if in triumph at having avenged his friend's death ! Then, as if remembering he had avenged, but not saved, his ears and trunk drooped ; and though he himself was torn and bleeding, his moist and thoughtful eye gave token that all his feelings were absorbed in grief for him he had lost. He stood over and watched the Arabs, who were making a sort of hurdle for the purpose of carrying away the dying man, for his breast was torn open, and one of his groins dreadfully mangled. The affectionate beast refused to eat, even after the man was conveyed out of sight . I placed the bamboo ladder against him, and Zela mounted to the howdah . he curled his trunk round ; and on recognizing who it was, resumed his former position, and continued to make low moans, as of anguish.

I must remark that the man for whom the elephant was mourning had long been his provider , and, since the death of the mahout who was killed by the chieftain, had himself become mahout. The elephant did not seem at all concerned at the death of the Tiroon, doubtless owing to his having been a bad and cruel master , for certainly these animals not only have reason, but are more rational than those they serve. In gratitude for his having saved Zela's and my life, I would, had it been possible, have kept, loved, and cherished him. When we parted from him, Zela kissed him, wept, and cut off some of the strong bristly hair near his ears, which I have ever worn, hooped round a ring, engraven with his name.

But again I am wandering from my subject ; nor can I restrain myself. I must dwell on those occurrences, however trifling to others, which were written on my memory thus early. Now my brain is like a confused scrawl, crossed and recrossed, blotted, soiled, and torn : it can contain no more, and that which was written in after years is illegible ; so that when I come to narrate the latter events of my life, it will be as difficult, and require as much time, toil, and patience, as the unrolling of the antique parchments of Herculaneum, or the Egyptian papyri, and, like them, when deciphered, not worth the trouble.

*From The Adventures of a Younger Son.*

## EDGAR ALLAN POE

1809-1849

### A DESCENT INTO THE MÆLSTRØM

WE had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

‘Not long ago,’ said he at length, ‘and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?’

The ‘little cliff,’ upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest, that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this ‘little cliff’ arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half-a-dozen yards of its brink. In truth, so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

You must get over these fancies,' said the guide, 'for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye'

'We are now,' he continued, in that particularizing manner which distinguished him—'we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapour beneath us, into the sea.'

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay out-stretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horribly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking for ever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land, arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick,



angry cross dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

‘The island in the distance,’ resumed the old man, ‘is called by the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Islesen, Hotholm, Keildhelm, Suarven, and Bückholm. Farther off—between Moskoe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Stockholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?’

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie, and at the same moment I perceived what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These

streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray, but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half-shriek, half-roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

‘This,’ said I at length, to the old man—‘this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelstrom.’

‘So it is sometimes termed,’ said he. ‘We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-strom, from the island of Moskoe in the midway.’

The ordinary accounts of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

‘Between Lofoden and Moskoe,’ he says, ‘the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, towards Ver (Vurrgh), this depth

decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts, the noise being heard several leagues off; and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence, and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground.'

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The 'forty fathoms' must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the

shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the centre of the Moskoe-strom must be immeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears, for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing, that the largest ships of the line in existence, coming within the influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember, seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Faroe Islands, ‘have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises, the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments.’ These are the words of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Kircher and others imagine that in the centre of the channel of the Maelstrom is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion, he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it

becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

‘You have had a good look at the whirl now,’ said the old man, ‘and if you will creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoe-ström.’

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

‘Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burden, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if one has only the courage to attempt it, but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen, we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the outhward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but in far greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day, what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labour, and courage answering for capital.

‘We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes’ slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflesen, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until nearly time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which

is a rare thing indeed just about here ; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have been driven out to sea in spite of everything (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently, that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged it), if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—here to-day and gone to-morrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

‘I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered “on the ground”—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-strom itself without accident ; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times, in using the sweeps, as well as afterwards in fishing—but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the young ones get into danger—for, after all said and done, it *was* a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

‘It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the 10th of July 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning, and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the south-west, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

‘The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o’clock p.m., and

soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven, *by my watch*, when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Strom at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

'We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uneasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-coloured cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

'In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

'Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seamen in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

'Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Strom, by way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at

once—for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escaped destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the foremast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer, I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses, so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard; but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror, for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word "*Moskoo-strom!*"

'No one ever will know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot as if I had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of the Strom, and nothing could save us!'

'You perceive that in crossing the Strom channel, we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! "To be sure," I thought, "we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that"—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as



to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

‘By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much, as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing, now got up into absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw—and of a deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a lustre that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, O God, what a scene it was to light up !

‘I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but in some manner which I could not understand, the dir had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers, as if to say “*listen !*”

‘At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o’clock ! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Strom was in full fury !*

‘When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears very strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea phrase.

‘Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly ; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that made me feel

sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-Strom whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the every-day Moskoe-Strom, than the whirl as you now see it, is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognized the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

‘It could not have been more than two minutes afterwards until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels, letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl, and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

‘It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I supposed it was despair that strung my nerves.

‘It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own

individual life, in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make, and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's mind in such extremity—and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

‘There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession; and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation—for, as you saw yourself, the belt of surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black, mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

‘How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask, which had been securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavoured to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure

grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all, so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. Thus there was no great difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel—only swaying to and fro, with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

‘As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased, and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage and looked once again upon the scene.’

‘Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel, vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

‘At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little,

however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation, than if we had been upon a dead level; and this I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

‘The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmans say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that went up to the heavens from out of that mist, I dare not attempt to describe.

‘Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us to a great distance down the slope, but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement—but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

‘Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels, large masses of building timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had

taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious—for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. "This fir tree," I found myself at one time saying, "will certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears," and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. At length, after making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all—this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculations, set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart beat heavily once more.

It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewn the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-strom. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, from some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important observations. The first was, that as a general rule, the larger the bodies were, the more rapid their descent—the

second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other of *any other shape*, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere—the third, that, between two masses of equal size, the one cylindrical, and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the district, and it was from him that I learned the use of the words “cylinder” and “sphere.” He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments—and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body of any form whatever.

‘There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things, which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool, were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

‘I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother’s attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design—but whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him, the emergency admitted of no delay, and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment’s hesitation.

‘The result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale—as you see that I *did* escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have further to say—I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabout, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and for ever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momentarily less and less steep, the gyrations of the whirl grew gradually less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-strom *had been*. It was the hour of the slack—but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Strom, and in a few minutes, was hurried down the coast into the “grounds” of the fishermen. A boat picked me up—exhausted from fatigue—and (now that the danger was removed)—speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions—but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveller from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven-black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They say, too, that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to *you*—and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden.’



# ALEXANDER WILLIAM KINGLAKE

1809-1891

## CROSSING THE DESERT

GAZA stands upon the verge of the Desert, and bears towards it the same kind of relation as a seaport bears to the sea. It is there that you *charter* your camels ('the ships of the Desert'), and lay in your stores for the voyage.

In a couple of days I was ready to start. The way of providing for the passage of the Desert is this. there is an agent in the town who keeps himself in communication with some of the desert Arabs that are hovering within a day's journey of the place; a party of these, upon being guaranteed against seizure or other ill-treatment at the hands of the Governor, come into the town, bringing with them the number of camels which you require, and then they stipulate for a certain sum to take you to the place of your destination in a given time. The agreement thus made by them includes a safe-conduct through their country, as well as the hire of the camels.

According to the contract made with me, I was to reach Cairo within ten days from the commencement of the journey. I had four camels, one for my baggage, one for each of my servants, and one for myself. Four Arabs, the owners of the camels, came with me on foot. My stores were a small soldier's tent, two bags of dried bread brought from the convent at Jerusalem, and a couple of bottles of wine from the same source, two goat-skins filled with water, tea, sugar, a cold tongue, and (of all things in the world) a jar of Irish butter which Mysseri had purchased from some merchant. There was also a small sack of charcoal, for the greater part of the Desert through which we were to pass is void of fuel.

The camel kneels to receive her load, and for a while she will allow the packing to go on with silent resigna-

tion ; but when she begins to suspect that her master is putting more than a just burden upon her poor hump, she turns round her supple neck, and looks sadly upon the increasing load, and then gently remonstrates against the wrong with the sigh of a patient wife. If sighs will not move you, she can weep. You soon learn to pity and soon to love her for the sake of her gentle and womanish ways.

You cannot, of course, put an English or any other riding saddle upon the back of the camel, but your quilt or carpet, or whatever you carry for the purpose of lying on at night, is folded and fastened on to the pack-saddle upon the top of the hump, and on this you ride, or rather sit. You sit as a man sits on a chair when he sits astride. I made an improvement on this plan : I had my English stirrups strapped on to the crossbars of the pack-saddle ; and thus, by gaining rest for my dangling legs, and gaining, too, the power of varying my position more easily than I could otherwise have done, I added very much to my comfort.

The camel, like the elephant, is one of the old-fashioned sort of animals that still walk along upon the (now nearly exploded) plan of the ancient beasts that lived before the Flood. She moves forward both her near legs at the same time, and then awkwardly swings round her off-shoulder and haunch, so as to repeat the manœuvre on that side ; her pace therefore is an odd, disjointed, and disjoining sort of movement that is rather disagreeable at first, but you soon grow reconciled to it. The height to which you are raised is of great advantage to you in passing the burning sands of the desert, for the air at such a distance from the ground is much cooler and more lively than that which circulates beneath.

For several miles beyond Gaza the land, freshened by the rains of the last week, was covered with rich verdure, and thickly jewelled with meadow flowers so bright and fragrant that I began to grow almost uneasy—to fancy that the very Desert was receding before me, and that the long-desired adventure of passing its ‘ burning sands ’ was to end in a mere ride across a field. But as

I advanced, the true character of the country began to display itself with sufficient clearness to dispel my apprehensions, and before the close of my first day's journey I had the gratification of finding that I was surrounded on all sides by a tract of real sand, and had nothing at all to complain of, except that there peeped forth at intervals a few isolated blades of grass, and many of those stunted shrubs which are the accustomed food of the camel.

Before sunset I came up with an encampment of Arabs (the encampment from which my camels had been brought), and my tent was pitched amongst theirs. I was now amongst the true Bedouins. Almost every man of this race closely resembles his brethren; almost every man has large and finely-formed features, but his face is so thoroughly stripped of flesh, and the white folds from his headgear fall down by his haggard cheeks so much in the burial fashion, that he looks quite sad and ghastly; his large dark orbs roll slowly and solemnly over the white of his deep-set eyes, his countenance shows painful thought and long suffering—the suffering of one fallen from a high estate. His gait is strangely majestic, and he marches along with his simple blanket, as though he were wearing the purple. His common talk is a series of piercing screams and cries very painful to hear.

In passing the Desert you will find your Arabs wanting to start and to rest at all sorts of odd times; they like, for instance, to be off at one in the morning, and to rest during the whole of the afternoon. You must not give way to their wishes in this respect. I tried their plan once, and found it very harassing and unwholesome. An ordinary tent can give you very little protection against heat, for the fire strikes fiercely through single canvas, and you soon find that whilst you lie crouching and striving to hide yourself from the blazing face of the sun, his power is harder to bear than it is where you boldly defy him from the airy heights of your camel.

It had been arranged with my Arabs that they were to bring with them all the food which they would want for themselves during the passage of the Desert, but as

we rested at the end of the first day's journey by the side of an Arab encampment, my camel-men found all that they required for that night in the tents of their own brethren. On the evening of the second day, however, just before we encamped for the night, my four Arabs came to Dthemetri, and formally announced that they had not brought with them one atom of food, and that they looked entirely to my supplies for their daily bread.

This was awkward intelligence. We were now just two days deep in the Desert, and I had brought with me no more bread than might be reasonably required for myself and my European attendants. I believed at the moment (for it seemed likely enough) that the men had really mistaken the terms of the arrangement, and feeling that the bore of being put upon half rations would be a less evil (and even to myself a less inconvenience) than the starvation of my Arabs, I at once told Dthemetri to assure them that my bread should be equally shared with all. Dthemetri, however, did not approve of this concession; he assured me quite positively that the Arabs thoroughly understood the agreement, and that if they were now without food, they had wilfully brought themselves into this strait for the wretched purpose of bettering their bargain by the value of a few paras' worth of bread.

This suggestion made me look at the affair in a new light. I should have been glad enough to put up with the slight privation to which my concession would subject me, and could have borne to witness the semi-starvation of poor Dthemetri with a fine philosophical calm, but it seemed to me that the scheme, if scheme it were, had something of audacity in it, and was well enough calculated to try the extent of my softness. I knew the danger of allowing such a trial to result in a conclusion that I was one who might be easily managed, and therefore after thoroughly satisfying myself from Dthemetri's clear and repeated assertions that the Arabs had really understood the arrangement, I determined that they should not now violate it by taking advantage of my position in the midst of their big

Desert ; so I desired Dthemetri to tell them that they should touch no bread of mine. We stopped, and the tent was pitched , the Arabs came to me and prayed loudly for bread ; I refused them.

‘ Then we die ! ’

‘ God’s will be done.’

I gave the Arabs to understand that I regretted their perishing by hunger, but that I should bear this calmly, like any other misfortune not my own—that, in short, I was happily resigned to *their* fate. The men would have talked a great deal, but they were under the disadvantage of addressing me through a hostile interpreter. They looked hard upon my face, but they found no hope there, so at last they retired, as they pretended, to lay them down and die.

In about ten minutes from this time I found that the Arabs were busily cooking their bread ! Their pretence of having brought no food was false, and was only invented for the purpose of saving it. They had a good bag of meal, which they had contrived to stow away under the baggage upon one of the camels in such a way as to escape notice. In Europe the detection of a scheme like this would have occasioned a disagreeable feeling between the master and the delinquent, but you would no more recoil from an Oriental on account of a matter of this sort than in England you would reject a horse that had tried and failed to throw you. Indeed I felt quite good-humouredly towards my Arabs because they had so woefully failed in their wretched attempt, and because, as it turned out, I had done what was right ; they too, poor fellows, evidently began to like me immensely, on account of the hard-heartedness which had enabled me to baffle their scheme.

The Arabs adhere to those ancestral principles of bread-baking which have been sanctioned by the experience of ages. The very first baker of bread that ever lived must have done his work exactly as the Arab does at this day. He takes some meal, and holds it out in the hollow of his hands whilst his comrade pours over it a few drops of water , he then mashes up the moistened

flour into a paste, pulls the lump of dough so made into small pieces, and thrusts them into the embers. His way of baking exactly resembles the craft or mystery of roasting chestnuts as practised by children : there is the same prudence and circumspection in choosing a good berth for the morsel—the same enterprise and self-sacrificing valour in pulling it out with the fingers.

The manner of my daily march was this. At about an hour before dawn I rose, and made the most of about a pint of water which I allowed myself for washing. Then I breakfasted upon tea and bread. As soon as the beasts were loaded, I mounted my camel and pressed forward. My poor Arabs being on foot would sometimes moan with fatigue and pray for rest, but I was anxious to enable them to perform their contract for bringing me to Cairo within the stipulated time, and I did not, therefore, allow a halt until the evening came. About mid-day, or soon after, Mysseri used to bring up his camel alongside of mine and supply me with a piece of the dried bread softened in water, and also (as long as it lasted) with a piece of the tongue. After this there came into my hand (how well I remember it !) the little tin cup half filled with wine and water.

As long as you are journeying in the interior of the Desert you have no particular point to make for as your resting-place. The endless sands yield nothing but small stunted shrubs ; even these fail after the first two or three days, and from that time you pass over broad plains—you pass over newly-reared hills—you pass through valleys dug out by last week's storm, and the hills and the valleys are sand, sand, sand, still sand, and only sand and sand, and sand again. The earth is so samely that your eyes turn towards heaven—towards heaven, I mean, in sense of sky.

You look to the Sun, for he is your taskmaster, and by him you know the measure of the work that you have done, and the measure of the work that remains for you to do. He comes when you strike your tent in the early morning, and then, for the first hour of the day, as you move forward on your camel, he stands at your near

side, and makes you know that the whole day's toil is before you ; then for a while, and a long while, you see him no more, for you are veiled and skrouded, and dare not look upon the greatness of his glory, but you know where he strides overhead, by the touch of his flaming sword. No words are spoken, but your Arabs moan, your camels sigh, your skin glows, your shoulders ache, and for sights you see the pattern and the web of the silk that veils your eyes, and the glare of the outer light.

Time labours on—your skin glows, your shoulders ache, your Arabs moan, your camels sigh, and you see the same pattern in the silk, and the same glare of light beyond ; but conquering Time marches on, and by and by the descending sun has compassed the heaven, and now softly touches your right arm, and throws your lank shadow over the sand right along on the way for Persia. Then again you look upon his face, for his power is all veiled in his beauty, and the redness of flames has become the redness of roses : the fair, wavy cloud, that fled in the morning now comes to his sight once more—comes blushing, yet still comes on, comes burning with blushes, yet comes and clings to his side.

Then begins your season of rest. The world about you is all your own, and there, where you will, you pitch your solitary tent ; there is no living thing to dispute your choice. When at last the spot had been fixed upon and we came to a halt, one of the Arabs would touch the chest of my camel, and utter at the same time a peculiar gurgling sound. The beast instantly understood and obeyed the sign, and slowly sank under me, till she brought her body to a level with the ground ; then gladly enough I alighted. The rest of the camels were unloaded and turned loose to browse upon the shrubs of the Desert, where shrubs there were, or where these failed, to wait for the small quantity of food that was allowed them out of our stores.

My servants, helped by the Arabs, busied themselves in pitching the tent and kindling the fire. Whilst this was doing I used to walk away towards the east, confiding in the print of my foot as a guide for my return.

Apart from the cheering voices of my attendants, I could better know and feel the loneliness of the Desert. The influence of such scenes, however, was not of a softening kind, but filled me rather with a sort of childish exultation in the self-sufficiency which enabled me to stand thus alone in the wideness of Asia—a short-lived pride, for wherever man wanders he still remains tethered by the chain that links him to his kind ; and so when the night closed round me I began to return—to return as it were to my own gate. Reaching at last some high ground, I could see, and see with delight, the fire of our small encampment, and when at last I regained the spot, it seemed a very home that had sprung up for me in the midst of these solitudes. My Arabs were busy with their bread—Mysseri rattling teacups, the little kettle with her odd old-maidish looks sat humming away old songs about England, and two or three yards from the fire my tent stood prim and tight, with open portal and with welcoming look.

Sometimes in the earlier part of my journey the night-breeze blew coldly, when that happened the dry sand was heaped up outside round the skirts of the tent, and so the Wind, that everywhere else could sweep as he listed along those dreary plains, was forced to turn aside in his course, and make way, as he ought, for the Englishman. Then within my tent there were heaps of luxuries—~~dining~~-rooms, dressing-rooms, libraries, bedrooms, drawing-rooms, oratories—all crowded into the space of a hearthrug. The first night, I remember, with my books and maps about me, I wanted a light. They brought me a taper, and immediately from out of the silent Desert there rushed in a flood of life, unseen before. Monsters of moths of all shapes and hues, that never before perhaps had looked upon the shining of a flame, now madly thronged into my tent, and dashed through the fire of the candle till they fairly extinguished it with their burning limbs. Those who had failed in attaining this martyrdom suddenly became serious, and clung despondently to the canvas

By and by there was brought to me the fragrant tea,



and big masses of scorched and scorching toast, and the butter that had come all the way to me in this Desert of Asia from out of that poor, dear, starving Ireland. I feasted like a king—like four kings—like a boy in the fourth form.

When the cold, sullen morning dawned, and my people began to load the camels, I always felt loath to give back to the waste this little spot of ground that had glowed for a while with the cheerfulness of a human dwelling. One by one the cloaks, the saddles, the baggage, the hundred things that strewed the ground and made it look so familiar—all these were taken away, and laid upon the camels. A speck in the broad tracts of Asia remained still impressed with the mark of patent portmanteaus and the heels of London boots ; the embers of the fire lay black and cold upon the sand ; and these were the signs we left

My tent was spared to the last, but when all else was ready for the start then came its fall, the pegs were drawn the canvas shivered, and in less than a minute there was nothing that remained of my genial home but only a pole and a bundle. The encroaching Englishman was off, and instant upon the fall of the canvas, like an owner who had waited and watched, the Genius of the Desert stalked in.

To servants, as I suppose to any other Europeans not much accustomed to amuse themselves by fancy or memory, it often happens that after a few days' journeying the loneliness of the Desert will become frightfully oppressive. Upon my poor fellows the access of melancholy came heavy, and all at once, as a blow from above ; they bent their necks, and bore it as best they could : but their joy was great on the fifth day, when we came to an Oasis, where we found encamped a caravan—that is, an assemblage of travellers—from Cairo.

The Orientals living in cities never pass the Desert except in this way. Many will wait for weeks, and even for months, until a sufficient number of persons can be found ready to undertake the journey at the same time—until the flock of sheep is big enough to fancy itself a

match for wolves. They could not, I think, really secure themselves against any serious danger by this contrivance, for though they have arms, they are so little accustomed to use them, and so utterly unorganized, that they never could make good their resistance to robbers of the slightest respectability. It is not of the Bedouins that such travellers are afraid, for the safe-conduct granted by the Chief of the ruling tribe is never, I believe, violated; but it is said that there are deserters and scamps of various sorts who hover about the skirts of the Desert, particularly on the Cairo side, and are anxious to succeed to the property of any poor folks whom they may find more weak and defenceless than themselves.

These people from Cairo professed to be amazed at the ludicrous disproportion between their numerical forces and mine. They could not understand, and they wanted to know, by what strange privilege it is that an Englishman with a brace of pistols and a couple of servants rides safely across the Desert; while they, the natives of the neighbouring cities, are forced to travel in troops, or rather in herds. One of them got a few minutes of private conversation with Dthemetri, and ventured to ask him anxiously whether the English did not travel under the protection of Evil Demons. I had previously known that this notion, so conducive to the safety of our countrymen, is generally prevalent amongst Orientals.

It owes its origin partly to the strong wilfulness of the English gentleman (a quality which, not being backed by any visible authority either civil or military, seems perfectly superhuman to the soft Asiatic), but partly, too, to the magic of the Banking system, by force of which the wealthy traveller will make all his journeys without carrying a handful of coin, and yet, when he arrives at a city, will ram down showers of gold. The theory is that the English traveller has committed some sin against God and his conscience, and that for this the Evil Spirit has hold of him, and drives him from his home like a victim of the old Grecian Furies, and forces him to travel over countries far and strange, and most chiefly over deserts and desolate places, and to stand upon the

sites of cities that once were, and are now no more, and to grope among the tombs of dead men. Often enough there is something of truth in this notion ; often enough the wandering Englishman is guilty (if guilt it be) of some pride or ambition, big or small, imperial or parochial, which being offended has made the lone places more tolerable than ballrooms to him a sinner

I can understand the sort of amazement of the Orientals at the scantiness of the retinue with which an Englishman passes the Desert, for I was somewhat struck myself when I saw one of my countrymen making his way across the wilderness in this simple style. At first there was a mere moving speck in the horizon. My party, of course, became all alive with excitement, and there were many surmises. Soon it appeared that three laden camels were approaching, and that two of them carried riders. In a little while we saw that one of the riders wore the European dress, and at last the travellers were pronounced to be an English gentleman and his servant. By their side there were a couple of Arabs on foot, and this, if I rightly remember, was the whole party

You—you love sailing—in returning from a cruise to the English coast, you see often enough a fisherman's humble boat far away from all shores, with an ugly, black sky above, and an angry sea beneath ; you watch the grisly old man at the helm carrying his craft with strange skill through the turmoil of waters, and the boy, supple-limbed, yet weather-worn already, and with steady eyes that look through the blast, you see him understanding commandments from the jerk of his father's white eyebrow—now belaying, and now letting go—now scrunching himself down into mere ballast, or baling out Death with a pipkin.

Familiar enough is the sight, and yet when I see it I always stare anew, and with a kind of Titanic exultation, because that a poor boat, with the brain of a man and the hands of a boy on board, can match herself so bravely against black Heaven and Ocean. Well, so when you have travelled for days and days over an Eastern Desert without meeting the likeness of a human being, and then

at last see an English shooting-jacket, and a single servant come listlessly slouching along from out of the forward horizon, you stare at the wide unproportion between this slender company and the boundless plains of sand through which they are keeping their way.

This Englishman, as I afterwards found, was a military man returning to his country from India, and crossing the Desert at this part in order to go through Palestine. As for me, I had come pretty straight from England, and so here we met in the wilderness at about half-way from our respective starting-points. As we approached each other it became with me a question whether we should speak. I thought it likely that the stranger would accost me, and in the event of his doing so I was quite ready to be as sociable and chatty as I could be according to my nature, but still I could not think of anything particular that I had to say to him. Of course among civilized people the not having anything to say is no excuse at all for not speaking; but I was shy and indolent, and I felt no great wish to stop and talk like a morning visitor in the midst of those broad solitudes.

The traveller perhaps felt as I did, for, except that we lifted our hands to our caps and waved our arms in courtesy, we passed each other quite as distantly as if we had passed in Pall Mall. Our attendants, however, were not to be cheated of the delight that they felt in speaking to new listeners and hearing fresh voices once more. The masters, therefore, had no sooner passed each other than their respective servants quietly stopped and entered into conversation. As soon as my camel found that her companions were not following her she caught the social feeling, and refused to go on. I felt the absurdity of the situation, and determined to accost the stranger, if only to avoid the awkwardness of remaining stuck fast in the Desert whilst our servants were amusing themselves. When with this intent I turned round my camel, I found that the gallant officer had passed me by about thirty or forty yards, and was exactly in the same predicament as myself. I put my now willing camel in motion, and rode up towards the stranger.

Seeing this, he followed my example, and came forward to meet me. He was the first to speak. Too courteous to address me, as if he admitted the possibility of my wishing to accost him from any feeling of mere sociability or civilian-like love of vain talk, he at once attributed my advances to a laudable wish of acquiring statistical information, and accordingly, when we got within speaking distance, he said, 'I dare say you wish to know how the Plague is going on at Cairo?' and then he went on to say he regretted that his information did not enable him to give me in numbers a perfectly accurate statement of the daily deaths. He afterwards talked pleasantly enough upon other and less ghastly subjects. I thought him manly and intelligent—a worthy one of the few thousand strong Englishmen to whom the Empire of India is committed.

The night after the meeting with the people of the caravan, Dthemetri, alarmed by their warnings, took upon himself to keep watch all night in the tent. No robbers came except a jackal that poked his nose into my tent from some motive of rational curiosity. Dthemetri did not shoot him for fear of waking me. These brutes swarm in every part of Syria, and there were many of them even in the midst of those void sands which would seem to give such poor promise of food. I can hardly tell what prey they could be hoping for, unless it were that they might find now and then the carcass of some camel that had died on the journey. They do not marshal themselves into great packs like the wild dogs of Eastern cities, but follow their prey in families like the place-hunters of Europe. Their voices are frightfully like to the shouts and cries of human beings. If you lie awake in your tent at night, you are almost continually hearing some hungry family as it sweeps along in full cry. You hear the exulting scream with which the sagacious dam first winds the carrion, and the shrill response of the unanimous cubs as they snuff the tainted air—'Wha! wha!—wha! wha!—wha! wha!—whose gift is it in, mamma?'

Once during this passage my Arabs lost their way

among the hills of loose sand that surrounded us, but after a while we were lucky enough to recover our right line of march. The same day we fell in with a Sheik, the head of a family, that actually dwells at no great distance from this part of the Desert during nine months of the year. The man carried a matchlock, and of this he was inordinately proud on account of the supposed novelty and ingenuity of the contrivance. We stopped, and sat down and rested awhile, for the sake of a little talk.

There was much that I should have liked to ask this man, but he could not understand Dthemetri's language, and the process of getting at his knowledge by double interpretation through my Arabs was tedious. I discovered, however (and my Arabs knew of that fact), that this man and his family lived habitually for nine months of the year without touching or seeing either bread or water. The stunted shrub growing at intervals through the sand in this part of the Desert enables the camel-mares to yield a little milk, and this furnishes the sole food and drink of their owner and his people. During the other three months (the hottest, I suppose) even this resource fails, and then the Sheik and his people are forced to pass into another district. You would ask me why the man should not remain always in that district which supplies him with water during three months of the year, but I don't know enough of Arab politics to answer the question.

The Sheik was not a good specimen of the effect produced by his way of living. He was very small, very spare, and sadly shrivelled—a poor over-roasted snipe—a mere cinder of a man. I made him sit down by my side and gave him a piece of bread and a cup of water from out of my goat-skins. This was not very tempting drink to look at, for it had become turbid, and was deeply reddened by some colouring matter contained in the skins; but it kept its sweetness, and tasted like a strong decoction of Russian leather. The Sheik sipped this drop by drop with ineffable relish, and rolled his eyes solemnly round between every draught, as though the drink were the drink of the Prophet, and had come from the seventh heaven.

An inquiry about distances led to the discovery that this Sheik had never heard of the division of time into hours.

About this part of my journey I saw the likeness of a fresh-water lake. I saw, as it seemed, a broad sheet of calm water stretching far and fair towards the south—stretching deep into winding creeks, and hemmed in by jutting promontories, and shelving smooth off towards the shallow side. On its bosom the reflected fire of the sun lay playing and seeming to float as though upon deep still waters.

Though I knew of the cheat, it was not till the spongy foot of my camel had almost trodden in the seeming lake that I could undeceive my eyes, for the shore-line was quite true and natural. I soon saw the cause of the phantasm. A sheet of water, heavily impregnated with salts, had gathered together in a vast hollow between the sandhills, and when dried up by evaporation had left a white saline deposit, this exactly marked the space which the waters had covered, and so traced out a good shore-line. The minute crystals of the salt, by their way of sparkling in the sun, were made to seem like the dazzled face of a lake that is calm and smooth.

The pace of the camel is irksome, and makes your shoulders and loins ache, from the peculiar way in which you are obliged to suit yourself to the movements of the beast; but one soon, of course, becomes inured to the work, and after my first two days, this way of travelling became so familiar to me that (poor sleeper as I am) I now and then slumbered for some moments together on the back of my camel. On the fifth day of my journey the air above lay dead and all the whole earth that I could reach with my utmost sight and keenest listening was still and lifeless, as some dispeopled and forgotten world that rolls round and round in the heavens through wasted floods of light.

The sun, growing fiercer and fiercer, shone down more mightily now than ever on me he shone before, and as I dropped my head under his fire, and closed my eyes against the glare that surrounded me, I slowly fell asleep

—for how many minutes or moments I cannot tell ; but after a while I was gently awakened by a peal of church bells—my native bells—the innocent bells of Marlen, that never before sent forth their music beyond the Blaygon hills ! My first idea naturally was that I still remained fast under the power of a dream. I roused myself, and drew aside the silk that covered my eyes, and plunged my bare face into the light. Then, at least I was well enough awakened , but still those old Marlen bells rang on, not ringing for joy, but properly, prosily, steadily, merrily ringing ‘ for church ’.

After a while the sound died away slowly. It happened that neither I nor any of my party had a watch by which to measure the exact time of its lasting, but it seemed to me that about ten minutes had passed before the bells ceased. I attributed the effect to the great heat of the sun, the perfect dryness of the clear air through which I moved, and the deep stillness of all around me. It seemed to me, that these causes, by occasioning a great tension and consequent susceptibility of the hearing organs, had rendered them liable to tingle under the passing touch of some mere memory that must have swept across my brain in a moment of sleep. Since my return to England it has been told me that like sounds have been heard at sea, and that the sailor, becalmed under a vertical sun in the midst of the wide ocean, has listened in trembling wonder to the chime of his own village bells.

During my travels I kept a journal—a journal sadly meagre and intermittent, but one which enabled me to find out the day of the month and the week, according to the European calendar. Referring to this, I found that the day was Sunday, and roughly allowing for the difference of longitude, I concluded that at the moment of my hearing that strange peal the church-going bells of Marlen must have been actually calling the prim congregation of the parish to morning prayer. The coincidence amused me faintly, but I could not allow myself a hope that the effect I had experienced was anything other than an illusion—an illusion liable to be explained (as every illusion



is in these days) by some of the philosophers who guess at Nature's riddles. It would have been sweeter to believe that my kneeling mother, by some pious enchantment, had asked and found this spell to rouse me from my scandalous forgetfulness of God's holy day ; but my fancy was too weak to carry a faith like that. Indeed, the vale through which the bells of Marlen send their song is a highly respectable vale, and its people (save one, two, or three) are wholly unaddicted to the practice of magical arts.

After the fifth day of my journey I no longer travelled over shifting hills, but came upon a dead level—a dead level bed of sand, quite hard, and studded with small shining pebbles.

The heat grew fierce, there was no valley nor hollow, no hill, no mound, no shadow of hill nor of mound by which I could mark the way I was making. Hour by hour I advanced, and saw no change—I was still the very centre of a round horizon. Hour by hour I advanced, and still there was the same, and the same, and the same—the same circle of flaming sky—the same circle of sand still glaring with light and fire. Over all the heaven above, over all the earth beneath, there was no visible power that could baulk the fierce will of the sun. 'He rejoiced as a strong man to run a race ; his going forth was from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it' and there was nothing hid from the heat thereof. From pole to pole, and from the east to the west, he brandished his fiery sceptre as though he had usurped all heaven and earth. As he bid the soft Persian in ancient times, so now, and fiercely too, he bid me bow down and worship him ; so now in his pride he seemed to command me, and say, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me.' I was all alone before him. There were these two pitted together, and face to face—the mighty Sun for one, and for the other—this poor, pale, solitary Self of mine that I always carry about with me.

But on the eighth day, and before I had yet turned away from Jehovah for the glittering god of the Persians, there appeared a dark line upon the edge of the forward

horizon, and soon the line deepened into a delicate fringe that sparkled here and there as though it were sown with diamonds. There, then, before me were the gardens and the minarets of Egypt, and the mighty works of the Nile, and I (the eternal Ego that I am <sup>1</sup>)—I had lived to see, and I saw them.

When evening came I was still within the confines of the Desert, and my tent was pitched as usual, but one of my Arabs stalked away rapidly towards the west without telling me of the errand on which he was bent. After a while he returned. He had toiled on a graceful service—he had travelled all the way on to the border of the living world, and brought me back for a token an ear of rice, full, fresh, and green.

The next day I entered upon Egypt, and floated along (for the delight was as the delight of bathing) through green wavy fields of rice and pastures fresh and plentiful, and dived into the cold verdure of groves and gardens, and quenched my hot eyes in shade, as though in a bed of deep waters.

From *Eothen*.

## CHARLES DICKENS

1812-1870

### THE STORM AT YARMOUTH

‘DON’T you think that,’ I asked the coachman, in the first stage out of London, ‘a very remarkable sky?’ I don’t remember to have seen one like it’

‘Nor I—not equal to it,’ he replied ‘That’s wind, sir. There’ll be mischief done at sea, I expect, before long’

It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened. There had been a wind all day, and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and blew hard

But as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow, harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times, in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short), the leaders turned about, or came to a dead stop; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before this storm, like showers of steel; and, at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle.

When the day broke, it blew harder and harder. I had been in Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great

guns, but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it. We came to Ipswich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London; and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who had risen from their beds in the night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these, congregating about the inn-yard while we changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church-tower, and flung into a by-street, which they then blocked up. Others had to tell of country people, coming in from neighbouring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields. Still there was no abatement in the storm but it blew harder.

As we struggled on, nearer and nearer to the sea, from which this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, its force became more and more terrific. Long before we saw the sea, its spray was on our lips, and showered salt rain upon us. The water was out, over miles and miles of the flat country adjacent to Yarmouth; and every sheet and puddle lashed its banks, and had its stress of little breakers setting heavily towards us. When we came within sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. When at last we got into the town, the people came out to their doors, all aslant, and with streaming hair, making a wonder of the mail that had come through such a night.

I put up at the old inn, and went down to look at the sea; staggering along the street, which was strewn with sand and seaweed, and with flying blotches of sea-foam; afraid of falling slates and tiles, and holding by people I met, at angry corners. Coming near the beach, I saw, not only the boatmen, but half the people of the town, lurking behind buildings; some, now and then braving the fury of the storm to look away to sea, and blown sheer out of their course in trying to get zigzag back.

Joining these groups, I found bewailing women whose husbands were away in herring or oyster boats, which there was too much reason to think might have foundered

before they could run in anywhere for safety. Grizzled old sailors were among the people, shaking their heads, as they looked from water to sky, and enquiring to one another; shipowners, excited and uneasy, children, huddling together, and peering into older faces, even stout mariners, disturbed and anxious, levelling their glasses at the sea from behind places of shelter, as if they were surveying an enemy.

The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills, masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds fell fast and thick, I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

Not finding Ham among the people whom this memorable wind—for it is still remembered down there, as the greatest ever known to blow upon that coast—had brought together, I made my way to his house. It was shut, and as no one answered to my knocking, I went, by back ways and by-lanes, to the yard where he worked. I learned, there, that he had gone to Lowestoft, to meet some sudden exigency of ship-repairing in which his skill was required, but that he would be back to-morrow morning, in good time.

I went back to the inn ; and when I had washed and dressed, and tried to sleep, but in vain, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. I had not sat five minutes by the coffee-room fire, when the waiter coming to stir it, as an excuse for talking, told me that two colliers had gone down, with all hands, a few miles away ; and that some other ships had been seen labouring hard in the Roads, and trying in great distress, to keep off shore. Mercy on them, and on all poor sailors, said he, if we had another night like the last !

I was very much depressed in spirits, very solitary, and felt an uneasiness in Ham's not being there, disproportionate to the occasion. I was seriously affected, without knowing how much, by late events ; and my long exposure to the fierce wind had confused me. There was that jumble in my thoughts and recollections, that I had lost the clear arrangement of time and distance. Thus, if I had gone out into the town, I should not have been surprised, I think, to encounter some one who I knew must be then in London. So to speak, there was in these respects a curious inattention in my mind. Yet it was busy, too, with all the remembrances the place naturally awakened, and they were particularly distinct and vivid.

In this state, the waiter's dismal intelligence about the ships immediately connected itself, without any effort of my volition, with my uneasiness about Ham. I was persuaded that I had an apprehension of his returning from Lowestoft by sea, and being lost. This grew so strong with me, that I resolved to go back to the yard before I took my dinner, and ask the boat-builder if he thought his attempting to return by sea at all likely ? If he gave me the least reason to think so, I would go over to Lowestoft and prevent it by bringing him back with me.

I hastily ordered my dinner, and went back to the yard. I was none too soon, for the boat-builder, with a lantern in his hand, was locking the yard-gate. He quite laughed when I asked him the question, and said there was no fear, no man in his senses, or out of them, would put off in such a gale of wind. least of all Ham Peggotty, who had been born to seafaring.

So sensible of this, beforehand, that I had really felt ashamed of doing what I was nevertheless impelled to do, I went back to the inn. If such a wind could rise, I think it was rising. The howl and roar, the rattling of the doors and windows, the rumbling in the chimneys, the apparent rocking of the very house that sheltered me, and the prodigious tumult of the sea, were more fearful than in the morning. But there was now a great darkness besides, and that invested the storm with new terrors, real and fanciful.

I could not eat, I could not sit still, I could not continue steadfast to anything. Something within me, faintly answering to the storm without, tossed up the depths of my memory and made a tumult in them. Yet, in all the hurry of my thoughts, wild running with the thundering sea—the storm and my uneasiness regarding Ham were always in the foreground.

My dinner went away almost untasted, and I tried to refresh myself with a glass or two of wine. In vain I fell into a dull slumber before the fire, without losing my consciousness, either of the uproar out of doors, or of the place in which I was. Both became overshadowed by a new and undefinable horror; and when I awoke—or rather when I shook off the lethargy that bound me in my chair—my whole frame thrilled with objectless and unintelligible fear.

I walked to and fro, tried to read an old gazetteer, listened to the awful noises; looked at faces, scenes, and figures in the fire. At length, the steady ticking of the undisturbed clock on the wall tormented me to that degree that I resolved to go to bed.

It was reassuring, on such a night, to be told that some of the inn-servants had agreed together to sit up until morning. I went to bed, exceedingly weary and heavy; but, on my lying down, all such sensations vanished, as if by magic, and I was broad awake, with every sense refined.

For hours I lay there, listening to the wind and water, imagining, now, that I heard shrieks out at sea; now, that I distinctly heard the firing of signal guns; and now, the fall of houses in the town. I got up several times, and

looked out ; but could see nothing, except the reflection in the window-panes of the faint candle I had left burning and of my own haggard face looking in at me from the black void.

At length, my restlessness attained to such a pitch, that I hurried on my clothes, and went downstairs. In the large kitchen, where I dimly saw bacon and ropes of onions hanging from the beams, the watchers were clustered together, in various attitudes, about the table, purposely moved away from the great chimney, and brought near the door. A pretty girl, who had her ears stopped with her apron, and her eyes upon the door, screamed when I appeared, supposing me to be a spirit, but the others had more presence of mind, and were glad of an addition to their company. One man, referring to the topic they had been discussing, asked me whether I thought the souls of the collier-crews who had gone down, were out in the storm ?

I remained there, I dare say, two hours. Once, I opened the yard-gate, and looked into the empty street. The sand, the seaweed, and the flakes of foam, were driving by, and I was obliged to call for assistance before I could shut the gate again, and make it fast against the wind.

There was a dark gloom in my solitary chamber, when I at length returned to it ; but I was tired now, and, getting into bed again, fell—off a tower and down a precipice—into the depths of sleep. I have an impression that for a long time, though I dreamed of being elsewhere and in a variety of scenes, it was always blowing in my dream. At length, I lost that feeble hold upon reality, and was engaged with two dear friends, but who they were I don't know, at the siege of some town in a roar of cannonading.

The thunder of the cannon was so loud and incessant, that I could not hear something I much desired to hear, until I made a great exertion and awoke. It was broad day—eight or nine o'clock ; the storm raging, in lieu of the batteries ; and some one knocking and calling at my door.



'What is the matter?' I cried.

'A wreck! Close by!'

I sprung out of bed, and asked, what wreck?

'A schooner, from Spain or Portugal, laden with fruit and wine. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her! It's thought, down on the beach, she'll go to pieces every moment.'

The excited voice went ~~clattering~~ along the staircase, and I wrapped myself in my clothes as quickly as I could, and ran into the street.

Numbers of people were there before me, all running in one direction to the beach. I ran the same way, outstripping a good many, and soon came facing the wild sea.

The wind might by this time have lulled a little, though not more sensibly than if the cannonading I had dreamed of had been diminished by the silencing of half-a-dozen guns out of hundreds. But the sea having upon it the additional agitation of the whole night, was infinitely more terrific than when I had seen it last. Every appearance it had then presented, bore the expression of being *swelled*; and the height to which the breakers rose, and, looking over one another, bore one another down, and rolled in, in interminable hosts, was most appalling.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so confused that I looked out to sea for the wreck, and saw nothing but the foaming heads of the great waves. A half-dressed boatman, standing next me, pointed with his bare arm (a tattoo'd arrow on it, pointing in the same direction) to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us!

One mast was broken short off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side, entangled in a maze of sail and rigging; and all that ruin, as the ship rolled and beat—which she did without a moment's pause, and with a violence quite inconceivable—beat the side as if it would stave it in. Some efforts were even then being made to cut this portion of the wreck away; for as the ship, which was broadside on, turned towards us in her

rolling. I plainly descried her people at work with axes, especially one active figure with long curling hair, conspicuous among the rest. But a great cry, which was audible even above the wind and water, rose from the shore at this moment ; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, made a clean breach, and carried men, spars, casks, planks, bulwarks, heaps of such toys, into the boiling surge

The second mast was yet standing, with the rags of a rent sail, and a wild confusion of broken cordage flapping to and fro. The ship had struck once, the same boatman hoarsely said in my ear, and then lifted in and struck again. I understood him to add that she was parting amidships, and I could easily suppose so, for the rolling and beating were too tremendous for any human work to suffer long. As he spoke, there was another great cry of pity from the beach, four men arose with the wreck out of the deep, clinging to the rigging of the remaining mast, uppermost, the active figure with the curling hair.

There was a bell on board ; and as the ship rolled and dashed, like a desperate creature driven mad, now showing us the whole sweep of her deck as she turned on her beam-ends towards the shore, now nothing but her keel, as she sprung wildly over and turned towards the sea, the bell rang, and its sound, the knell of those unhappy men, was borne towards us on the wind. Again we lost her, and again she rose. Two men were gone. The agony on shore increased. Men groaned, and clasped their hands, women shrieked, and turned away their faces. Some ran wildly up and down along the beach, crying for help where no help could be. I found myself one of these, frantically imploring a knot of sailors whom I knew, not to let those two lost creatures perish before our eyes.

They were making out to me, in an agitated way—I don't know how, for the little I could hear I was scarcely composed enough to understand—that the lifeboat had been bravely manned an hour ago, and could do nothing ; and that as no man would be so desperate as to attempt to wade off with a rope, and establish a communication with the shore, there was nothing left to try, when I

noticed that some new sensation moved the people on the beach, and saw them part, and Ham come breaking through them to the front

I ran to him—as well as I know—to repeat my appeal for help. But, distracted though I was by a sight so new to me and terrible, the determination in his face, and his look out to sea—exactly the same look as I remembered in connexion with the morning after Emily's flight—awoke me to a knowledge of his danger. I held him back with both arms, and implored the men with whom I had been speaking, not to listen to him, not to do murder, not to let him stir from off that sand!

Another cry arose on shore, and looking to the wreck, we saw the cruel sail, with blow on blow, beat off the lower of the two men, and fly up in triumph round the active figure left alone upon the mast.

Against such a sight, and against such determination as that of the calmly desperate man who was already accustomed to lead half the people present, I might as hopefully have entreated the wind. 'Mas'r Davy,' he said, cheerily grasping me by both hands, 'if my time is come, 'tis come. If 'tan't, I'll bide it. Lord above bless you, and bless all! Mates, make me ready! I'm a-going off!'

I was swept away, but not unkindly, to some distance, where the people around me made me stay; urging, as I confusedly perceived, that he was bent on going, with help or without, and that I should endanger the precautions for his safety by troubling those with whom they rested. I don't know what I answered, or what they rejoined, but I saw hurry on the beach, and men running with ropes from a capstan that was there, and penetrating into a circle of figures that hid him from me. Then, I saw him standing alone, in a seaman's frock and trowsers, a rope in his hand, or slung to his wrist: another round his body, and several of the best men holding, at a little distance, to the latter, which he laid out himself, slack upon the shore, at his feet.

The wreck, even to my unpractised eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that

the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still, he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on—not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer colour, and as the few yielding planks between him and destruction rolled and bulged, and his anticipative death-knell rung, he was seen by all of us to wave it. I saw him do it now, and thought I was going distracted, when his action brought an old remembrance to my mind of a once dear friend.

Ham watched the sea, standing alone, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave, when, with a backward glance at those who held the rope which was made fast round his body, he dashed in after it, and in a moment was buffeting with the water; rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam; then drawn again to land. They hauled in hastily.

He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood, but he took no thought of that. He seemed hurriedly to give them some directions for leaving him more free—or so I judged from the motion of his arm—and was gone as before.

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship, striving hard and valiantly. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it, when a high, green, vast hill-side of water, moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone!

Some eddy fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet—insensible—dead. He was carried to the nearest house, and, no one preventing me now, I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration were tried, but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled for ever.

As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door

‘Sir,’ said he, with tears starting to his weather-beaten face, which, with his trembling lips, was ashy pale, ‘will you come over yonder?’

The old remembrance that had been recalled to me, was in his look. I asked him, terror-stricken, leaning on the arm he held out to support me.

‘Has a body come ashore?’

He said, ‘Yes’

‘Do I know it?’ I asked then.

He answered nothing

But he led me to the shore And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

*From David Copperfield.*

# CHARLES KINGSLEY

1819-1875

## AMYAS LEIGH'S LAST FIGHT

IN vain they had strained their eyes through the darkness to catch, by the fitful glare of the flashes, the tall masts of the Spaniard. Of one thing at least they were certain, that with the wind as it was, she could not have gone far to the westward ; and to attempt to pass them again, and go northward, was more than she dare do. She was probably lying to ahead of them, perhaps between them and the land, and when, a little after midnight, the wind chopped up to the west, and blew stiffly till daybreak, they felt sure that, unless she had attempted the desperate expedient of running past them, they had her safe in the mouth of the Bristol Channel.

Slowly and wearily broke the dawn, on such a day as often follows heavy thunder, a sunless, drizzly day, roofed with low dingy cloud, barred, and netted, and festooned with black, a sign that the storm is only taking breath a while before it bursts again, while all the narrow horizon is dim and spongy with vapour drifting before a chilly breeze. As the day went on the breeze died down, and the sea fell to a long, glassy, foam-flecked roll, while overhead brooded the inky sky, and round them the leaden mist shut out alike the shore and the chase.

Amyas paced the sloppy deck fretfully and fiercely. He knew that the Spaniard could not escape ; but he cursed every moment which lingered between him and that one great revenge which blackened all his soul. The men sat sulkily about the deck, and whistled for a wind ; the sails flapped idly against the masts, and the ship rolled in the long troughs of the sea, till her yard-arms almost dipped right and left.

'Take care of those guns You will have something loose next,' growled Amyas

‘We will take care of the guns, if the Lord will take care of the wind,’ said Yeo

‘We shall have plenty before night,’ said Cary, ‘and thunder too.’

‘So much the better,’ said Amyas ‘It may roar till it splits the heavens, if it does but let me get my work done

‘He’s not far off, I warrant,’ said Cary. ‘One lift of the cloud, and we should see him.’

‘To windward of us, as likely as not,’ said Amyas ‘The devil fights for him, I believe. To have been on his heels sixteen days, and not sent this through him yet!’ And he shook his sword impatiently

So the morning wore away, without a sign of living thing, not even a passing gull, and the black melancholy of the heaven reflected itself in the black melancholy of Amyas. Was he to lose his prey after all? The thought made him shudder with rage and disappointment. It was intolerable. Anything but that.

‘No, God!’ he cried, ‘let me but once feel this in his accursed heart, and then—strike me dead, if Thou wilt!’

‘The Lord have mercy on us!’ cried John Brimblecombe ‘What have you said?’

‘What is that to you, sir? There, they are piping to dinner. Go down. I shall not come!’

And Jack went down, and talked in a half-terrified whisper of Amyas’s ominous words

All thought that they portended some bad luck, except old Yeo.

‘Well, Sir John,’ said he, ‘and why not? What better can the Lord do for a man than take him home when he has done his work? Our captain is wilful and spiteful, and must needs kill his man himself, while for me, I don’t care how the Don goes, provided he does so. I owe him no grudge, nor any man. May the Lord give him repentance, and forgive him all his sins; but if I could but see him once safe ashore, I would say, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,” even if it were the lightning which was sent to fetch me.’

‘But Master Yeo, a sudden death?’

'And why not a sudden death, Sir John? Even fools long for a short life and a merry one, and shall not the Lord's people pray for a short death and a merry one? Let it come as it will to old Yeo. Hark! there's the captain's voice!'

'Here she is!' thundered Amyas from the deck; and in an instant all were scrambling up the hatchway as fast as the frantic rolling of the ship would let them.

Yes. There she was. The cloud had lifted suddenly, and to the south a ragged bore of blue sky let a long stream of sunshine down on her tall masts and stately hull, as she lay rolling some four or five miles to the eastward; but as for land, none was to be seen.

'There she is, and here we are,' said Cary; 'but where is here? and where is there? How is the tide, master?'

'Running up Channel by this time, sir.'

'What matters the tide?' said Amyas, devouring the ship with terrible and cold blue eyes. 'Can't we get at her?'

'Not unless some one jumps out and shoves behind,' said Cary. 'I shall down again and finish that mackerel, if this roll has not chucked it to the cockroaches under the table.'

'Don't jest, Will! I can't stand it,' said Amyas, in a voice which quivered so much that Cary looked at him. His whole frame was trembling like an aspen. Cary took his arm, and drew him aside.

'Dear old lad,' said he, as they leaned over the bulwarks, 'what is this? You are not yourself, and have not been these four days.'

'No. I am not Amyas Leigh. I am my brother's avenger. Do not reason with me, Will, when it is over, I shall be merry old Amyas again,' and he passed his hand over his brow.

Cary went away with a shudder. As he passed down the hatchway he looked back. Amyas had got the hone out of his pocket, and was whetting away again at his sword-edge as if there was some dreadful doom on him to whet and whet for ever.

The weary day wore on. The strip of blue sky was curtained over again, and all was dismal as before, though



it grew sultrier every moment, and now and then a distant mutter shook the air to westward. Nothing could be done to lessen the distance between the ships, for the *Vengeance* had had all her boats carried away but one, and that was much too small to tow her, and while the men went down again to finish dinner, Amyas worked on at his sword, looking up every now and then suddenly at the Spaniard, as if to satisfy himself that it was not a vision which had vanished.

About two Yeo came up to him.

'He is ours safely now, sir. The tide has been running to the eastward for this two hours.'

'Safe as a fox in a trap. Satan himself cannot take him from us!'

'But God may,' said Brimblecombe simply.

'Who spoke to you, sir? If I thought that He—there comes the thunder at last!'

And as he spoke, an angry growl from the westward heavens seemed to answer his wild words, and rolled and loudened nearer and nearer, till right over their heads it crashed against some cloud-cliff far above, and all was still.

Each man looked in the other's face but Amyas was unmoved.

'The storm is coming,' said he, 'and the wind in it.'

By this time all eyes were turned to the north-west, where a black line along the horizon began to define the boundary of sea and air, till now all dim in mist.

'There comes the breeze!'

'And there the storm, too!'

And with that strangely accelerating pace which some storms seem to possess, the thunder, which had been growling slow and seldom far away, now rang peal on peal along the cloudy floor above their heads.

After two hours more the four miles had diminished to one, while the lightning flashed nearer and nearer as the storm came up, and from the vast mouth of a black cloud-arch poured so fierce a breeze that Amyas yielded unwillingly to hints which were growing into open murmurs, and bade shorten sail.

On they rushed with scarcely lessened speed, the black arch following fast, curtained by one flat grey sheet of pouring rain, before which the water was boiling in a long white line ; while every moment, behind the watery veil, a keen blue spark leapt down into the sea, or darted zigzag through the rain

'We shall have it now, and with a vengeance ; this will try your tackle, master,' said Cary.

The functionary answered with a shrug, and turned up the collar of his rough frock, as the first drops flew stinging round his ears. Another minute and the squall burst full upon them in rain which cut like hail—hail which lashed the sea into froth, and wind which whirled off the heads of the surges, and swept the waters into one white seething waste. And above them, and behind them, and before them, the lightning leapt and ran dazzling and blinding, while the deep roar of the thunder was changed to sharp, ear-piercing cracks

And now Amyas and his old legeman were alone. Neither spoke ; each knew the other's thoughts, and knew that they were his own. The squall blew fiercer and fiercer, the rain poured heavier and heavier. Where was the Spaniard ?

'If he has laid-to, we may overshoot him, sir !'

'If he has tried to lay-to, he will not have a sail left in the bolt-ropes, or perhaps a mast on deck. I know the stiff-neckedness of those Spanish tubs. Hurrah ! there he is, right on our larboard bow !'

There she was, indeed, two musket-shots off, staggering away with canvas split and flying.

On they swept, gaining fast on the Spaniard.

'Call the men up, and to quarters, the rain will be over in ten minutes'

Yeo ran forward to the gangway, and sprang back again with a face white and wild.

'Land right ahead ! Port your helm, sir ! For the love of God, port your helm !'

Amyas, with the strength of a bull, jammed the helm down, while Yeo shouted to the men below

She swung round. The masts bent like whips ; crack

went the foresail like a cannon. What matter ? Within two hundred yards of them was the Spaniard, in front of her, and above her, a huge dark bank rose through the dense hail, and mingled with the clouds ; and at its foot, plainer every moment, pillars and spouts of leaping foam.

‘ What is it ?—Morte ? Hartland ? ’

It might be anything for thirty miles

‘ Lundy ! ’ said Yeo ‘ The south end ! I see the head of the Shutter in the breakers ! Hard a-port yet, and get her close-hauled as you can, and the Lord may have mercy on us still ! Look at the Spaniard ! ’

Yes, look at the Spaniard !

On their left hand, as they broached-to, the wall of granite sloped down from the clouds toward an isolated peak of rock, some two hundred feet in height. Then a hundred yards of roaring breaker upon a sunken shelf, across which the race of the tide poured like a cataract ; then, amid a column of salt smoke, the Shutter, like a huge black fang, rose waiting for its prey ; and between the Shutter and the land, the great galleon loomed dimly through the storm.

He, too, had seen his danger, and tried to broach-to. But his clumsy mass refused to obey the helm. He struggled a moment, half hid in foam, fell away again, and rushed upon his doom.

‘ Lost ! lost ! lost ! ’ cried Amyas madly, and throwing up his hands, let go the tiller. Yeo caught it just in time.

‘ Sir ! sir ! what are you at ? We shall clear the rock yet ’

‘ Yes ! ’ shouted Amyas in his frenzy ; ‘ but he will not ! ’

Another minute. The galleon gave a sudden jar, and stopped. Then one long heave and bound, as if to free herself. And then her bows lighted clean upon the Shutter.

An awful silence fell on every English soul. They heard not the roaring of wind and surge ; they saw not the blinding flashes of the lightning ; but they heard one long ear-piercing wail to every saint in heaven rise from five hundred human throats ; they saw the mighty ship

heel over from the wind, and sweep headlong down the cataract of the race, plunging her yards into the foam, and showing her whole black side even to her keel, till she rolled clean over, and vanished for ever and ever

'Shame !' cried Amyas, hurling his sword far into the sea, 'to lose my right, my right !' when it was in my very grasp ! Unmerciful !'

A crack that rent the sky, and made the granite ring and quiver, a bright world of flame, and then a blank of utter darkness, against which stood out, glowing red-hot, every mast, and sail, and rock, and Salvation Yeo as he stood just in front of Amyas, the tiller in his hand. All red-hot, transfigured into fire ; and behind, the black, black night.

\* \* \* \* \*

A whisper, a rustling close beside him, and Brimblecombe's voice said softly—

'Give him more wine, Will, his eyes are opening.'

'Hey-day !' said Amyas faintly, 'not past the Shutter yet ? How long she hangs in the wind !'

'We are long past the Shutter, Sir Amyas,' said Brimblecombe.

'Are you mad ? Cannot I trust my own eyes ?'

There was no answer for a while.

'We are past the Shutter, indeed,' said Cary, very gently, 'and lying in the cove at Lundy'

'Will you tell me that that is not the Shutter, and that the Devil's Limekiln, and that the cliff—that villain Spaniard only gone—and that Yeo is not standing here by me, and Cary there forward, and—why, by the by, where are you, Jack Brimblecombe, who were talking to me this minute ?'

'O Sir Amyas Leigh, dear Sir Amyas Leigh,' blubbered poor Jack, 'put out your hand, and feel where you are, and pray the Lord to forgive you for your wilfulness !'

A great trembling fell upon Amyas Leigh. Half fearfully he put out his hand, he felt that he was in his hammock, with the deck beams close above his head. The vision which had been left upon his eyeballs vanished like a dream.

'What is this? I must be asleep! What has happened? Where am I?'

'In your cabin, Amyas,' said Cary.

'What? And where is Yeo?'

'Yeo is gone where he longed to go, and as he longed to go. The same flash that struck you down struck him dead.'

'Dead? Lightning? Any more hurt? I must go and see! Why, what is this?' and Amyas passed his hand across his eyes. 'It is all dark—dark, as I live!' And he passed his hand over his eyes again.

There was another dead silence. Amyas broke it.

'O God!' shrieked the great proud sea-captain, 'O God, I am blind! blind! blind!' And writhing in his great horror, he called to Cary to kill him and put him out of his misery, and then wailed for his mother to come and help him, as if he had been a boy once more, while Brimblecombe and Cary, and the sailors who crowded round the cabin door, wept as if they too had been boys once more.

Soon his fit of fienzy passed off, and he sank back exhausted.

They lifted him into their remaining boat, rowed him ashore, and carried him painfully up the hill to the old castle, where they made a bed for him on the floor.

*From Westward Ho!*

## SIR WALTER BESANT

1836-1901

### GENERAL FORSTER'S ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE

ALL the story which I set myself to tell has now been written down, except only the manner and way of Tom's escape from Newgate which was as follows. We were not neglecting his affairs all the while; and Mr. Hilyard, as I have said, had found an honest sea captain. The man who was recommended to him was a certain smuggler or fisherman, named Shipman—a good name for one in his profession—who had a fast-sailing schooner or hoy, in which he carried on his trade. We were assured that we could thoroughly trust this man, and that, whether for carrying a cargo of Nantz, or parcel of lace, or a Jacobite gentleman, or a highwayman, or a Jesuit priest, or any other secret commodity, backwards or forwards across the water, the man had not his equal, whether for safety, secrecy, or dispatch. His terms were high, but then, in such times, one must pay for honesty. Thus, we were to give him fifty guineas for landing Tom upon the coast of France, but he knew beforehand that he had to do with a prisoner of distinction, for whose capture a much larger sum than fifty guineas would be offered. Surely a man who takes fifty guineas, and keeps his word, when treachery would have given him a thousand pounds, is worth waiting for.

We waited for him, therefore, until the end of February, when Mr. Hilyard found him, opened negotiations, and presently took me to meet him at a place called Limehouse. In appearance he was quite another guess kind of fellow from the other, the Judas Iscariot captain of Wapping, having a rough and honest face, with clear eyes, which looked straight. We soon came to terms. He declared that he could not afford to take less than fifty guineas for the trip, that times like these were

brisk for honest sailors like himself, who troubled not themselves about party matters, and cared not a sour herring which was King and which Pretender; and that he must make the best of his market. He then gave us to understand that the gentleman (whose name he knew not, and said he desired not to know, nor why he wished to leave his native shores) would not be the first by a great many whom he had carried across to France, and not one caught yet. For his own part, the more the merrier, and all the better for his old woman and the children: and he should not care if the Pretender's friends had a rising every month, nor if he was asked to carry King George himself and the Prince of Wales across to Holland out of the way. The fellow was so hearty, and had so honest a face, that one could not choose but trust him. Therefore I agreed, and instructed Mr Hilyard to make all other arrangements with him, as that he was not to have his money till his passenger was on board and the ship ready to drop down stream, that he was to be anchored off Leigh, in Essex, so as to avoid suspicion, and that he was, as soon as he had his schooner ready for sailing, to come to London, there to be at our service.

This done, I began to clench the business with my friendly turnkey. *Nota bene* that, all through these troubles of Frank Radcliffe's illness and my lord's execution, either Mr Hilyard or myself went daily to Newgate to cheer and encourage Tom, whose courage was now, what with the backsliding of his chaplain and the fate of Lord Derwentwater, as one may say, sunk down into his boots, almost beyond the power of a bottle to lift it up, nor did he derive any satisfaction save from his continual cursing of Mr Patten. We were so careful lest he should in his cups say a word which might cause suspicion, that we told him nothing of our design.

Now, however, that we had secured our ship, it was necessary, without further delay, to open the business more fully with my friendly warden, Jonas. If he failed, but not unless, Mr Hilyard should go to the honest Pitts, the Governor, and promise that greedy rogue all he asked. Therefore I went to the prison, where the worthy Jonas

sat in the lobby or anteroom ; but, instead of going straight through, I stopped, and, pulling out my handkerchief, began to cry and to wipe my eyes

'Alas !' I said, the trials must soon come on. Think you, good Jonas, that my brother's case will be the first ?'

'That, your ladyship,' he replied, jingling his keys, 'is more than we wardens know. First or last matters little, considering what the end must be'

'Lady Nithsdale,' I went on—'ah ! happy woman !—is said to have found a friend and helper among the guards of the Tower. But then, the Tower is not Newgate.'

'Belike she did,' he replied. 'Friends can always be found, even in Newgate, by the unhappy, if they go the right way to work'

'Ah !' I whispered, 'would to Heaven that I could find such a compassionate heart in Newgate, and how richly would I reward him !' I observed that his eyes twinkled and his fingers clutched as though already grasping the reward.

'Why,' he said, 'as for that, and if it could be done without Mr Pitts' knowledge, and was made well worth a body's while——'

'What do you call, Mr Jonas, worth a body's while ?'

'Why, to be plain, madam,' he said, 'do you think I did not know your tricks and your ways when you began with your soft looks and your guinea here and your half a guinea there, what it meant ? Let us come to business without further shilly-shally. What is it you want me to do, and for how much ?'

'As for what I want you to do,' I replied, 'it is simple and easy, and I will tell you presently ; as for the reward, you shall have something in hand—say ten guineas, but until General Forster is safe across the water, not a penny more.'

'I cannot send him across the water. But still—how much will your ladyship offer ?'

'Why—shall I say fifty guineas ?'

He laughed in my face.

'Fifty guineas ! Why, he was the General of the



Forces and he is a Member of Parliament ! Fifty guineas for the Man under the Rose ? Sure, madam, you seem to understand very little what your brother is worth in such a market as this. Fifty guineas ? Well, if that is all, there is an end.'

I informed him that General Forster was not like Lord Nithsdale, a man of a great estate, but, on the other hand, that his estates had been all sold up, so that he had nothing at all but what he would get at the death of his father. But he stiffly refused to do business, as he called it, on such shabby terms, and I was forced to raise my price. He was truly a most exorbitant creature, and refused to do anything until I gave him fifty guineas down, and an offer in writing to give him four hundred and fifty guineas more on my brother's escape being assured. The fellow had some education, it seems, and could read and write. I think he had been a kind of lawyer's clerk who had been put into this place in return for some services. 'If', he said, 'you make me the offer, I can put it into Mr. Pitts' hands should you play me false. Go away then, madam, and write it down, and bring the fifty pounds before we have any more dealings or talk.'

'But if,' I said, 'you play me false, and, after taking the fifty pounds, do not go on with the business.'

'Five hundred guineas,' he replied, 'though little enough reward for the escape of the General and the risk I run, is a mighty great sum for me. Your ladyship need not fear.'

I went away, therefore, and presently wrote on a piece of paper words which might have brought me to prison too, if this fellow showed them. For I said that I, Dorothy Forster, sister of General Forster, then in Newgate Jail, solemnly pledged myself to give one Jonas, warden or turnkey in the said jail, the sum of four hundred and fifty guineas sterling as soon as the said General Forster was out of the jail.

Next I sought my friend Purdy, the blacksmith, where I lodged, and told him that I wanted his services, but secretly, and without a word said to his wife, or his

prentices, or any living soul. He swore very readily to the greatest silence on the matter. Then I asked him whether, in case I put into his hand an impression in wax of a key, he would make me its counterpart in iron. He smiled, guessing very easily what I designed, and said that such an imitation was a thing belonging to his trade, and that he would undertake to make me such a key in a very little while, and nobody to guess or suspect a word of the matter.

I lost no time at all, but went back to the prison, found the worthy Mr. Jonas, who was waiting for me, and gave him the earnest-money which he asked—namely, fifty guineas in a purse.

‘So,’ he said, ‘this is business. And what next can I do to please your ladyship?’

I told him that I wanted an impression in wax of the master-key, which for the moment was all I would ask of him. This he made for me, and gave me very readily, only imploring that, should the possession of this be discovered, or the plot be prevented by any untoward misfortune, it should never be divulged how I got the key. And again he threatened, if the money was not paid after Mr. Forster’s escape, to put my paper in the hands of a justice, by which he said, I know not how truthfully, he could ensure my being put to death with all the barbarities proper for the crime.

In this simple method, without troubling Mr. Hilyard to complete his grand plot, and without any regard to what he called the dramatic situation, I obtained that most invaluable aid to an escape, a master-key.

Now, it was hard to keep my counsel during this time, for on the one hand I had to restrain the impatience of Mr. Hilyard, who would still be urging me to let him follow up the overtures he had made to Mr. Pitts, who indeed expected it, for his own part, and the sum of £10,000 having been mentioned between them, began to throw out hints not only to Mr. Hilyard but to myself, so that I was obliged to let him be plainly told that for the present at least nothing could be done. When I consider the number of escapes that were made from

Newgate, I am amazed that the man and his wardens and assistants were not brought to justice. Perhaps, however, the Ministry were not unwilling that the prisoners should escape. Lady Cowper told me, after all was done, that she had a strange offer before they were all brought up to London—that General Forster should be allowed to escape, if she pleased, upon the road. It came to her from Baron Bernstoft, through Mademoiselle Schutz, his niece. She told me further that at the time she was concerned chiefly about Mr. Clavering and his son, so that she did not heed the offer. But this explained why at the first she spoke so much about neglecting the chances of getting off while on the road. It rejoices me to think that so many brave fellows got clean away, but surely a generous King would have given them their pardon, rather than suffer them to get off by this ignominious way of bribing a jailer.

But while the greedy Mr. Pitts (who I suppose prays for such another rebellion every day) looked for no less a sum than £10,000, he knew not that his turnkey had been beforehand with him, and his most important prisoner was on the point of escaping and he never a penny the richer. It gives me the greatest satisfaction to think how this great rogue was outwitted, and of his discomfiture and rage when he found the bird was flown. I would have cheated the turnkey as well, but could not, having pledged my word.

It was not until the morning of the 6th March, ten days after my lord was butchered, that Mr. Hilyard reported to me first that our skipper was now in London, having left his vessel off the coast at Leigh; next, that he had bought four strong and capable saddle-horses, which were now standing in the stables of the Salutation Tavern, Newgate Street, and could be saddled in readiness for any time.

‘And now,’ he said, ‘for Heaven’s sake, Miss Dorothy, delay no longer. Let me see Mr. Pitts and close with him this very day.’

‘To-morrow you shall,’ I replied, ‘unless—— but first, oh! my only friend! first, I pray thee, do exactly as I

bid for this day. To-morrow, if I fail, which kind Heaven forbid, you shall have your turn.'

He begged me to give him his instructions

I told him, first, that the day was actually come, and my own preparations made; that nothing could be done until after dark, nor then until such time as the streets were clear of people, that in my judgement it would be at some time between nine in the evening and midnight that we should want the horses. Therefore that the skipper should have them saddled in readiness, and should wait in the stables from eight o'clock or so until we came for him, and for the love of the Lord not to get drunk.

Mr. Hilyard opened his eyes very wide at this, as you may believe, and looked grave, but forbore to speak, except to promise that he would most faithfully and strictly carry out my instructions, and so departed, leaving me anxious indeed, but now hopeful.

What I had was a master-key, what I wanted was the opportunity of using it without being observed. That chance must be sought after dark, and pretty late, when prisoners are all locked up and turnkeys and wardens off guard.

Then I went back to the prison, where I found Tom sitting in his chamber, but not alone. Alas! how different was the behaviour of the prisoners in Newgate from that of my lord in the Tower! There was dignity, with the virtues of repentance, faith, and charity. Here there was constant drinking, with the smoking of tobacco, and everlasting railing, quarrelling, and disputing, one prisoner with another. But I will speak no more of the Press Yard and its horrid sights.

There was a custom of visiting the prisoners, bringing them presents of wine, spirits, tobacco, meat, and so forth; and, as regards the better sort, talking with them, many gentlemen finding it a curious entertainment to pass the afternoon conversing with a man who would probably in a few weeks have his head and limbs plastered with pitch and stuck upon Temple Bar; it was interesting, no doubt, to think that the man who sat with

them was also going to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. As for themselves, they were honest Jacobites all, who were yet in no mood for undergoing that penalty, they were quite ready to sing loyal songs in a tavern, applaud loyal lines in a theatre, drink loyal toasts, frequent loyal coffee-houses, and, in fact, give the Prince every support short of fighting. With Tom there were sitting three of these gentlemen, not prisoners, though for the principles they professed, and the encouragement they had always given to the fighting men of the cause, they ought all to have been under lock and key if there were any justice in the world (but of that there seems mighty little). As for Tom himself, it was pitiful to see a man so pulled down by confinement, and trouble, and want of exercise, for his ruddy cheeks were pale and flabby, his once fresh bright eye was yellow, his hands shook, and so did his lip, and his eyes were full of anxiety. He sat in the midst of his comforters as Job sat in the midst of Elphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And, like these three sons of Consolation, who showed their friendliness by girding at the patriarch and imputing unto him secret sins, so did these three worthy gentlemen, each with a pipe of tobacco in his mouth, and happy in the consciousness that his own neck stood in little fear of being stretched, deliver their minds at large on the mistakes made by the English forces in the campaign (which, to be sure, was an easy thing to do), and discoursed freely (which was not a kind thing to do towards a gentleman in Tom's position) on the executions at Liverpool and Preston, the bloodthirsty temper of the Government, the miserable outlook of the unfortunate prisoners, and the cruelty and barbarity of the punishment inflicted. Lord Wintoun's case, they said, would occupy the earls for some weeks yet, after which, no doubt, Tom would be put upon his trial. Then they began to advise, all with contrary opinions, what kind of defence he should set up. Defence there was none, because, first of all, Tom was, more than any of the others, except Colonel Oxbrough and Captain Gascoigne, involved in the designs hatched in London (which, if they had been carried out, would have set all England in a

flame)· next, he had been the first to proclaim the Prince; and then he had actually been General of the English Forces. What could he plead in extenuation of these crimes?

'Gentlemen,' I said presently, because it seemed to me as if they were about to argue the case and conduct the whole trial to its gloomy end, which would take all the day—'Gentlemen, let me say that my brother's case will not be bettered by our talking about it beforehand. If on reflection you have any counsel which may serve us in this juncture, pray bestow it upon us, but 'tis idle to advise with a man upon trial for his life unless you have something that may help. So, if you please, gentlemen, and as my brother hath important affairs with me this day, I will ask you to leave him now and kindly come again to-morrow.'

'Nay,' protested Tom—being, like most men, dull at seeing more than plain words mean—'nay, my affairs may wait a day, Dorothy. Wherefore, let us send for a tankard and—'

'By your leave, brother,' I said, 'I have letters from the north which may not be delayed.'

I spoke so earnestly that the three gentlemen rose, and, with many promises to come again soon and comfort the prisoner, retired.

'Now, Dorothy,' cried Tom testily, 'what the devil is this wonderful business? Cannot a man have a single half-hour with his friends?'

'Friends! Yes, Tom, they are valuable and worthy friends, indeed, who egg on their companions to peril their lives and sit down themselves. I warrant you they drink the Prince's health every day. Oh, Tom! what said my father? That he gets best out of the fray who goes in last. What said my lady? Nay, I reproach you not, Tom. You shall never say that I reproached you. But—friends you call them? Cowardly betrayers of brave men, I call them. Colonel Oxbrough, at least, and Captain Gascoigne cast in their lot with us, even though they deceived us all. But this coffee-house loyalty! Why, they would like nothing better than to sit together

of an evening, and tell how they went to see you hanged, drawn, and quartered, and how you looked the while. And, oh ! the pity of it ! And what a gallant fellow was there ! And so another pipe '

' Why, Dorothy,' said Tom—but he shivered at mention of the word ' hanging '—' what ails the lass to-day ? Your colour comes and goes, and why are you crying ? '

' I am crying, Tom,' I said, because, in truth, there were tears and catchings of the breath, those outward signs of woman's weakness and her agitation—' I am crying, Tom, because I think that you have done with such false friends for ever.'

' Devil take me,' he said, dropping into his chair, ' if I know what she means ! '

' You shall soon know.' With this I lugged out my key ' This, Tom,' I whispered, ' is nothing less than the master-key. With this in your hand you can walk out whenever you please, that is, whenever you are not likely to be seen and followed '

He took the key from me, and looked at it as one might look at a strange monster

' The master-key,' he murmured. ' Why, then—I may cheat the gibbet yet '

' Oh ! Tom,' I seized him by the hand, ' if ever there was an occasion for prudence, it is this. Keep sober this evening if ever you want to drink again. Your chance, very likely your only chance, is to-night '

I then told him that I had secured him a passage by an unsuspected ship ; that we had got horses ready, which should be waiting at the stables of the Salutation Tavern, a short distance from the prison, that night ; that I would be either outside the prison-gates or with the horses.

' Dorothy,' he cried, changing countenance, ' is this thine own doing, child ? '

He took me in his arms and kissed me, shedding tears, and declaring that he was not worth the trouble that he caused the best of sisters, as he chose to call me. But I would have no time wasted in such tenderness.

' Think, Tom,' I said, ' you have to make your oppor-

tunity. Will you wait until the Governor is abed and asleep ? ’

‘ Nay,’ he said, ‘ there is also his man sits within the door all night. There must be another way ’

I had not thought of the Governor’s man. Yet I ought to have known that the Governor would not be left alone in his own house. Here was another and an unforeseen difficulty.

‘ It is the fellow they call Jonas,’ said Tom.

‘ Jonas ? ’ I asked. ‘ Then we shall have no trouble with him ’

So I told Tom all, and how I had got the key.

‘ Come,’ he said, ‘ I think I see a way, but we must tell my man, Thomas Lee. Thy brother, Dorothy, hath been truly a great fool. but he has some mother-wit left.’

So we talked very earnestly for half an hour ; and when I went out I found Jonas in the lobby, and told him what he was to do if necessary. Then, all being arranged, I came away.

He who hath never contrived a plot cannot know the difficulties of carrying it through. It was to be, first of all, my own design, confided to none but Tom, and to him only at the last moment, to Mr. Hilyard, and to him only in part ; yet there were besides, the captain, the turnkey, my brother’s servant Tom Lee, and the blacksmith who made the key. Any one of these was enough to spoil all. Truly, those who deal in conspiracies must go for ever in fear and trembling, every man concerned knowing that he can purchase pardon by revealing the names of his associates.

In early March the days begin to lengthen. The sun is twelve hours in the sky. We should have six hours at least of darkness before us, supposing that it was eleven of the clock before Tom found his way out. There was nothing meantime that I could do.

Then I sat down in my lodging and endeavoured to pass the time chiefly in prayer, but who can pray except in ejaculations at such a juncture ? This night would Tom be in safety, or else—presently the gibbet, and his



head on Temple Bar Surely I thought, there must be some doom upon the Forsters, so many misfortunes having happened to them ; out of nine children not one left living, though the eldest would not now be more than fifty-five, the great Bamborough inheritance lost and sold, the heir now lying (like to be hanged) in Newgate, and his sister hoping only to<sup>d</sup> secure his life by a timely flight

On ' long and weary hours, when one is waiting to learn the issue ' My landlady, a good soul, though a Non-conformist and a Whig, came to ask what she could do for me. I told her a falsehood, I said that I was going to my Lady Cowper, and should perhaps remain with her for the night. So she left me. Presently, because if one waits long enough, such a thing is sure to come at last, the night fell.

At seven, Mr Hilyard came He said the horses would be saddled and kept in readiness, the skipper being already in the place, and under promise, to keep sober, while to disarm suspicion he had been himself cursing all gentlemen who sit late over their bottle, when they should be up and on their way.

At eight, because I could no longer endure the waiting and suspense, I dressed, putting on my warm hood and gloves and having in my pocket my money, *videlicet*, a hundred guineas, of which fifty were for the captain and fifty for Tom, to serve his needs until we could send him more Mr. Hilyard had girded on a sword (he was mighty martial since the affair at Preston), and told me he had placed two loaded pistols in his saddle He carried a roquelaure, and wore a short riding wig, in place of his own full-bottomed perruque, and great boots He also carried a huge bludgeon for the admonition of Mohocks and street-scurvers.

Thus equipped, we sallied forth, the time being about half-past eight, the night clear and bright We avoided the great broad field named after Lincoln's Inn, because of the highwaymen and thieves who abound there, but by way of Little Queen Street emerged into the broad highway called Holborn, where there are continually

until a late hour passengers and carriages of all kinds. It is not a street of good repute after dark, being frequented by the lawyers and wild students of Gray's Inn, Barnard's Inn, Staple Inn, and Furnival's Inn, besides on both sides having streets into which an honest man may not venture, even by day, to say nothing of the night. The road ends in a steep descent, called Snow Hill, on the south side of which is the famous Fleet Market, and on the north, as Mr. Hilyard told me, Chick Lane, Cow Lane, and other evil places where the footpad and pickpocket lurk and live between their floggings, and until they meet their allotted end at Tyburn. At the bottom of the hill you come to the prison, and the old gate standing across the street. I know not which looked more gloomy in the moonlight—the black stone prison in which so many brave fellows lay waiting for their doom, or the dark city gate, beyond which lay the way of our safety.

Opposite the prison, where the street narrows, is a row of stalls used by day for the sale of fish, fruit, and meat, but at night left bare; a row of bulkheads on which, I believe, in summer poor houseless wretches, of whom there are so many in this great city, pass their nights. But on this cold winter evening they were quite deserted. The moon shone full upon the prison side of the street, leaving this in darkness.

Mr. Hilyard led me into this dark side, behind the stalls, so that we could see, without being seen, what went on in the street.

Nine o'clock struck from St. Sepulchre's Church—that church which rings the knell for the departing souls of those who are on their way to be hanged. The night was so cold that there were few in the streets, and at nine it is late for honest folk, though early for revellers. To me, standing hidden in the dark, the figures of those who passed were like the figures that are seen in a dream. I remember them all to this day—the sturdy citizen in broadcloth, carrying his trusty staff; the drunken fellow, who reeled from post to post, shouting a song; the young woman in a domino and a gaudy dress; the old constable,

with his lantern and his staff; the wretched starving children who crept in and out among the bulkheads looking for something to eat—I remember every one

Mr. Hilyard stood beside me, patient and silent. It was not till after all was finished and done that I understood the extraordinary faithfulness and loyalty of this man, who had not hesitated first to hazard his life for a cause which he loved not, or an enterprise which he knew from the beginning would be a failure, in gratitude to his patron, whose favours he had already repaid tenfold by services such as are rendered by few—else were this world made too happy. Then, when he escaped, he did not fear to hazard his life a second time, and that daily, by going to a place more fatal to rebels than Preston itself had proved, and that in the most frightful weather, and encumbered by a helpless woman. I say that I was so selfish as to accept these things as my just due, and only what one had a right to look for, and as if all these services were to be given without a murmur, and with a cheerful heart

The clock struck the quarters—one, two, three, four. It was ten, and no sign yet from the door of the Governor's house.

What happened within was as follows. When I left him Tom called for his servant, and they took counsel together. Now, it was Tom's hospitable practice to desire the company of any gentlemen within reach, over his bottle of an evening. Therefore, his room was nearly every night filled with guests from the prison, who drank around, and fought their unlucky campaign over again. The ordinary of Newgate was generally one of them; the Governor of the prison, Mr. Pitts, another, and one or two of the prisoners who occupied, with Tom, the Governor's room, also sat with him. This evening Mr. Pitts came, according to custom, and Sir Francis Anderton (a gentleman from Lancashire, who had the bad luck to join at Preston the day before the fight). Fortunately there were no others. Tom had arranged with his servant, Thomas Lee, that he was to be drinking downstairs with Mr. Pitts' man, Jonas, and any others, but that he

should contrive to be left the last with Jonas ; and, when they were alone, he was to invent some way in which it should seem as if he had forcibly silenced the fellow. (I believe he was to knock him on the head, if necessary ; but Jonas needed no such extremity of persuasion ) Then he was to run upstairs and let his master know that the coast was clear. Like master, like man. While they drank port upstairs, downstairs they drank beer. Below they drank so much, and they talked so long, that it was eleven o'clock before they separated. Then Thomas Lee was left alone with Jonas

'Come, lad,' said he, 'let's have another pot. Go draw it'

The fellow (this being the plan agreed upon) took the jug and went to the cellar-door, which, as soon as he reached, Lee shut upon him (as had also been agreed between them), knocking him down the cellar steps (which was not in the agreement). This done, and Jonas sprawling on the floor below, Tom Lee made the door fast with a peg above the latch.

Then he went softly up the stairs to his master's room, and opening the door, peeped in. Sir Francis was talking at a great rate, being somewhat disguised in wine ; Mr Forster was sitting opposite to him, and in a chair beside the door sat Mr. Pitts, the Governor. But his face was purple with much wine, and his eyes were heavy and stupid

'Sir,' said Tom, seeing the servant at the door, 'another glass ; a bumper. Why the night is young, and we have another bottle at least to finish.' So he poured out a brimming one, and gave it to Mr Pitts ; and, because the Governor's hand was too unsteady to carry the glass, Tom kindly lifted it to his lips. Mr. Pitts drained it greedily, his head fell back, his eyes closed, and his mouth open. Mr Pitts was as drunk as any gentleman can desire to be.

'I am going to escape, Sir Francis,' said Tom calmly ; 'the way is clear. Will you join company ?'

'Not I, General,' said Sir Francis. 'I prefer to stay where I am until they let me go. I doubt whether

running away will serve me so well as keeping still. Hang me they will not. Of that I have assurance. And I would save my estate if I could. But if I were you, I would go, and that as quickly as may be.

It was about half-past eleven when, to my unspeakable joy, the door opened, and I saw Tom and the servant Lee standing in the moonlight. There was not another person in the Old Bailey. I rushed across and dragged him by the arm. 'Come, Tom! hasten!' I cried. 'Oh! quick—quick!'

'By your leave, sir,' said Lee. 'If we lock the door from the outside, and leave the key in the lock, they will not be able to open it from within.' And this he did.

Then we walked quickly away, my own heart beating. By good luck we met no one in Newgate Street, though if we had I suppose there would have been no notice taken of us. The stable-yard of the Salutation Tavern was full of men who were loading and unloading wagons, late as it was; but this was better for us, because it enabled our horses to be brought out without attracting notice. Here I must not forget one thing. The night was very cold. Tom was dressed in his ordinary grey cloth coat. Mr. Hilyard took off his roquelaure and threw it over his shoulders, saying, 'Thus I brought for your honour to wear,' and so went cold himself all that night.

You may be sure we lost no time in mounting, and rode off through the quiet streets, where the echo of our horses' feet seemed to me like the ringing of alarm-bells. There were plenty of people still in Cheapside, the London citizens caring little about late hours, they passed along the street behind the posts, but paid no heed to the party who rode so late. I suppose it is not much more than half a mile from Newgate Street to Aldgate, but to me it seemed ten miles, so slowly did the time pass; and Mr. Hilyard whispering continually:

'Go easy, sir; seem not to be in haste; in a few minutes we shall be beyond the streets and in the open. Make no sign of haste.'

Tom rode in the middle, his roquelaure wrapped round him hiding his face, I on his right, in hood and cloak;

Mr. Hilyard on his left, and, behind, our friend the skipper and the man Thomas Lee.

'Why,' said Tom, when at last we were in the open road, with fields on either side, and the stars above our heads were clear and bright—'why, I believe we may give them the slip yet; what say you, Tony?'

'I say, sir,' replied Mr. Hilyard, 'that if your honour doth not get off, it will be by some vile accident. But if you do, you must thank Miss Dorothy for it, and no one else, except Lord Crewe, who gave us the money.'

This was the night of the 6th of March, and will never be forgotten, because it was the night of that dreadful appearance in the heavens, which frightened the whole of England, and none, I think, more than the party who were riding as quickly as they could along the road which leads from London to Leigh, through Tilbury. It appeared in the north, and was at first like a black cloud, from which there presently began to dart streaks or arrows of red, blue, or pale fire. This dreadful spectacle lasted the whole night through, but sometimes more terrible for awhile, and then growing low as a fire which spends itself. Then it would light up again with flames of all colours most frightful to see. As we rode through the villages the people were all out in the roads dressed, and crying, weeping, wringing their hands, or praying; in more than one the clergyman was exhorting the people to instant repentance and preparation for death, many, I heard afterwards, were frightened into fits, and children were born before their time in consequence of the universal terror, for none would believe but that they were gazing upon the flames of hell, and that the end of the world was come.

'This cannot fail,' said Mr. Hilyard, 'to be a mark of Heaven's displeasure, did we only know at what. For it may be that the Lord is angry at the recent rebellion, or because it failed, or at the execution of the two lords, which seems probable, or at the accession of King George—and yet he is a Protestant; or at the flight of the Prince—but he is a Papist. If one could certainly tell what was intended by this apparition, one might move

all hearts to do the will of the Lord. But as in oracles there is doubt, and in the interpretation of the Word there is disagreement, so in such matters as this appearance in the skies (which is indeed terrifying), and in comets, shooting stars, meteors, and flaming swords in the heavens, while we can have no doubt that they are intended by way of warning and admonition to us all, I think that we must each read and interpret the message for ourselves.

'Is it, Tony,' asked Tom, 'the end of the world? To be sure, one would rather meet that awful event in the open than in the Governor's House tippling with Mr. Pitts.'

'I think not', replied Mr. Hilyard, 'that it is yet the end of the world, many prophecies remaining to be fulfilled.' I confess I felt relief at this assurance. 'Besides, we must remember that it is not the first time by a great many that strange appearances have been permitted in the heavens.'

He then began to while away the time, we now proceeding at a steady trot along the deserted roads, by recalling some of the well-known miraculous signs, as Constantine's cross, the fiery dragon of Staffordshire, the double sun of Chatham, and so forth; by means of which, if he did not altogether allay our fears, he distracted our thoughts, and in this way we arrived at the coast and little village of Leigh. It is thirty-nine miles from London, but no large places on the road except Barking, and, not to speak of the villagers whom we found frightened in the streets, we met no one all the way from Bow, and drew rein somewhere about four o'clock in the morning, having ridden the distance in five hours, the roads good and hard, and the night fine (except for that dreadful phenomenon in the north). Thus far, then, had we succeeded almost beyond our hopes. At low tide the water runs out very far at Leigh, and leaves a long bank of mud, but now the tide was very high, and a fair wind from the north-west, and though the moon was long since gone down, there was plenty of light from the terrible fire in the north.

Half a dozen vessels lay off the coast, looking black against the sky. Our skipper pointed to one at whose bows there hung two lights.

'It is the vessel,' he said. 'There is my ship.'

There followed great whistling and shouting of 'Ship ahoy!' and presently a little boat came rowing from her with one man aboard, who pulled ashore.

'Now, sir,' said our captain.

'The bargain stands,' said Mr Hilyard, before the money was handed over.

'Ay, ay—the bargain is right enough if the guineas are ready.'

'Here they are, then.'

Mr. Hilyard gave him the bag with the fifty guineas in it. He opened it, looked at the contents, and put it in his pocket without counting.

'Good,' he said. 'Now, sir, if your honour is to get aboard, the sooner the better. The tide is on the ebb, and a fairer wind couldn't be. If it holds, we shall be in Calais Harbour in eight hours.'

'Dorothy,' said Tom, 'kiss me, my dear. I shall come back soon—with the Prince. Take care of her, Tony. Why, the good days shall come back again. Many a bottle shall we crack together yet; many a song you shall sing for us. Farewell—oh! Dorothy, think not I am ungrateful because I say little. There is not another woman in the world who would do so much for her brother, I think. Thy hand again, Tony. Take care of her, I say.'

And with that he stepped into the boat with his man, and they were gone. We stood upon the shore and watched. Presently we heard a yo-hoing—they were hauling up the anchor; then the ship began to drift slowly into the mid-channel; the sails were set, and filled out in the breeze; the vessel slipped out of our sight, and was gone.

I fell upon my knees, while Mr. Hilyard, taking off his hat, solemnly thanked God. Behind us, as we offered this humble service of gratitude and praise, the awful fire in the northern sky darted its arrows of fire like lightnings



to and fro. Then, without halting, we mounted again and rode back together, leaving the other three horses to stray where they listed. Our work was almost done. There remained one thing more—to put the messengers on a false scent in case of the vessel being delayed off the Nore by a contrary wind. ‘For’, said Mr Hilyard, ‘this wind may drop or chop round: any such accident may happen. His honour is not safe until he is on French soil. Let us, therefore, go seek the villain at Wapping, who looks to receive the reward and then to betray us.’

At Barking I was fain to cry a halt, and must needs rest. It was then past six o’clock, and already daylight. I was in those days as strong as most young women, but a whole night in the saddle, after the weariness and anxiety of the day, was sufficient excuse for any one to be tired.

After two or three hours’ rest I was able to ride on to Wapping. We found the fellow we were in search of, and deceived him with the expectation of taking Mr. Forster, whose name we gave him, on board the next day. So successful was this deception, and so correct was Mr. Hilyard’s estimate of the man, that on his information messengers were sent to Wapping to lie in wait for the escaped prisoner, for whose capture they offered a thousand pounds. But before a week passed we had a letter from Tom. He was safe in France, and proposed to go to Bar-le-Duc, where the Prince was holding his Court.

Thus was I suffered, by the mercy of Heaven, to save my brother’s life. ‘Child,’ said Lady Cowper, ‘be assured that we all rejoice. Your brother could not be pardoned. If any were to suffer, needs must that the General be one. Lucky he is in having such a sister. I have told the Princess whose wit it was that set the bird free, and she laughed. As for yourself, rest easy, my dear. There will no harm happen to thee.’

*Docthy Forster, ch. xxxix* (By kind permission  
of the Executors of the late Sir Walter Besant.)

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850-1894

## ST IVES' ESCAPE

### I

THE time for our escape drew near, and the nearer it came the less we seemed to enjoy the prospect. There is but one side on which this castle can be left either with dignity or safety ; but as there is the main gate and guard, and the chief street of the upper city, it is not to be thought of by escaping prisoners. In all other directions an abominable precipice surrounds it, down the face of which (if anywhere at all) we must regain our liberty. By our concurrent labours in many a dark night, working with the most anxious precautions against noise, we had made out to pierce below the curtain about the south-west corner, in a place they call the *Devil's Elbow*. From the heel of the masonry the rascally breakneck precipice descended sheer among waste lands, scattered suburbs of the city, and houses in the building. I had never the heart to look for any length of time—the thought that I must make the descent in person some dark night robbing me of breath ; and, indeed, on anybody not a seaman or a steeple-jack, the mere sight of the *Devil's Elbow* wrought like an emetic.

I don't know where the rope was got, and doubt if I much cared. It was not that which perplexed me, but whether, now that we had it, it would serve our turn. Its length, indeed, we made a shift to fathom out ; but who was to tell us how that length compared with the way we had to go ? Day after day there would be always some of us stolen out to the *Devil's Elbow* and making estimates of the descent, whether by a bare guess or the dropping of stones. A private of pioneers remembered the formula for that—or else remembered part of it and obligingly invented the remainder.

I had never any real confidence in that formula ; and even had we got it from a book, there were difficulties in the way of application that might have daunted Archimedes. We durst not drop any considerable pebble lest the sentinels should hear, and those that we dropped we could not hear ourselves. We had never a watch—or none that had a second-hand , and though every one of us could guess a second to a nicety, all somehow guessed it differently. In short, if any two set forth upon this enterprise, they invariably returned with two opinions, and often with a black eye in the bargain. I looked on upon these proceedings, although not without laughter, yet with impatience and disgust. I am one that cannot bear to see things botched or gone upon with ignorance ; and the thought that some poor fellow was to hazard his bones upon such premises revolted me. Had I guessed the name of that unhappy first adventurer, my sentiments might have been livelier still.

The designation of this personage was indeed all that remained for us to do , and even in that we had advanced so far that the lot had fallen on Shed B. It had been determined to mingle the bitter and the sweet , and whoever went down first, the whole of his shed-mates were to follow next in order. This caused a good deal of joy in Shed B, and would have caused more if it had not still remained to choose our pioneer. In view of the ambiguity in which we lay as to the length of the rope and the height of the precipice, and of the fact that this gentleman was to climb down from fifty to seventy fathoms on a pitchy night, on a rope entirely free, and with not so much as an infant child to steady it at the bottom, a little backwardness was perhaps excusable. But it was, in our case, more than a little. The truth is, we were all womanish fellows about a height ; and I have myself been put, more than once, *hors de combat* by a less affair than the rock of Edinburgh Castle.

We discussed it in the dark and between the passage of the rounds ; and it was impossible for any body of men to show a less adventurous spirit. Some were persuaded it was safe, and could prove the same by

argument ; but if they had good reasons why some one else should make the trial, they had better still why it should not be themselves. Others, again, condemned the whole idea as insane, among these, as ill-luck would have it, a seaman of the fleet, who was the most dispiriting of all. The height, he reminded us, was greater than the tallest ship's mast, the rope entirely free ; and he as good as defied the boldest and strongest to succeed. We were relieved from this dead-lock by our sergeant-major of dragoons.

'Comrades,' said he, 'I believe I rank you all ; and for that reason, if you really wish it, I will be the first myself. At the same time, you are to consider what the chances are that I may prove to be the last, as well. I am no longer young—I was sixty near a month ago. Since I have been a prisoner I have made for myself a little *bedaine*. My arms are all gone to fat. And you must promise not to blame me if I fail and make a mess of the whole thing.'

'We cannot hear of such a thing,' said I. 'M. Laclas is the oldest man here ; and, as such, he should be the very last to offer. It is plain, we must draw lots.'

'No,' said M. Laclas, 'you put something else in my head ! There is one here who owes a pretty candle to the others, for they have kept his secret. Besides, the rest of us are only rabble ; and he is another affair altogether. Let Champdivers—let the noble go the first.'

I confess there was a notable pause before the noble in question got his voice. But there was no room for choice. I had been so ill-advised, when I first joined the regiment, as to take ground on my nobility. I had been often rallied on the matter in the ranks, and had passed under the by-names of Monseigneur and the *Marquis*. It was now needful that I should justify myself and take a fair revenge.

Any little hesitation I may have felt passed entirely unnoticed, from the lucky incident of a round happening at that moment to go by. And during the interval of silence there occurred something that sent my blood to the boil. There was a private in our shed called Clausel,

a man of a very ugly disposition. He had made one of the followers of Goguelat ; but, whereas Goguelat had always a kind of monstrous gaiety about him, Clausel was no less morose than he was evil-minded. He was sometimes called *the General*, and sometimes by a name too ill-mannered for repetition. As we all sat listening, this man's hand was laid on my shoulder, and his voice whispered in my ear. ' If you don't go, I'll have you hanged, Marquis ! '

As soon as the round was past—' Certainly, gentlemen ! ' said I. ' I will give you a lead, with all the pleasure in the world. But, first of all, there is a hound here to be punished. M. Clausel has just insulted me, and dishonoured the French Army ; and I demand that he run the gauntlet of this shed. '

There was but one voice asking what he had done, and, as soon as I told them, but one voice agreeing to the punishment. The General was, in consequence, extremely roughly handled, and the next day was congratulated by all who saw him on his new decorations. It was lucky for us that he was one of the prime movers and believers in our project of escape, or he had certainly revenged himself by a denunciation. As for his feelings towards myself, they appeared, by his looks, to surpass humanity ; and I made up my mind to give him a wide berth in the future.

Had I been able to go down that instant, I believe I could have carried it well. But it was already too late—the day was at hand. The rest had still to be summoned. Nor was this the extent of my misfortune ; for the next night, and the night after, were adorned with a perfect galaxy of stars, and showed every cat that stirred in a quarter of a mile. During this interval, I have to direct your sympathies on the Vicomte de Saint-Yves ! All addressed me sorrowfully, like folk round a sick bed. Our Italian corporal, who had got a dozen of oysters from a fishwife, laid them at my feet, as though I were a pagan idol ; and I have never since been wholly at my ease in the society of shellfish. He who was the best of our carvers brought me a snuff-box, which he had just com-

pleted, and which, while it was yet in hand, he had often declared he would not part with under fifteen dollars. I believe the piece was worth the money too! And yet the voice stuck in my throat with which I must thank him. I found myself, in a word, to be fed up like a prisoner in a camp of anthropophagi, and honoured like the sacrificial bull. And what with these annoyances, and the risky venture immediately ahead, I found my part a trying one to play.

It was a good deal of a relief when the third evening closed about the castle with volumes of sea-fog. The lights of Princes Street sometimes disappeared, sometimes blinked across at us no brighter than the eyes of cats, and five steps from one of the lanterns on the ramparts it was already groping dark. We made haste to lie down. Had our jailers been upon the watch they must have observed our conversation to die out unusually soon. Yet I doubt if any of us slept. Each lay in his place, tortured at once with the hope of liberty and the fear of a hateful death. The guard call sounded; the hum of the town declined by little and little. On all sides of us, in their different quarters, we could hear the watchmen cry the hours along the street. Often enough, during my stay in England, have I listened to these gruff or broken voices, or perhaps gone to my window when I lay sleepless, and watched the old gentleman hobble by upon the causeway with his cape and his cap, his hanger and his rattle. It was ever a thought with me how differently that cry would re-echo in the chamber of lovers, beside the bed of death, or in the condemned cell. I might be said to hear it that night myself in the condemned cell! At length a fellow with a voice like a bull's began to roar out in the opposite thoroughfare.

'Past yin o'clock, and a dark, haary moarnin'.'

At which we were all silently afoot.

As I stole about the battlements towards the—gallows, I was about to write—the sergeant-major, perhaps doubtful of my resolution, kept close by me, and occasionally proffered the most indigestible reassurances in my ear. At last I could bear them no longer.

'Be so obliging as to let me be!' said I. 'I am neither a coward nor a fool. What do *you* know of whether the rope be long enough? But I shall know it in ten minutes!'

The good old fellow laughed in his moustache, and patted me.

It was all very well to show the disposition of my temper before a friend alone; before my assembled comrades the thing had to go handsomely. It was then my time to come on the stage: and I hope I took it handsomely.

'Now, gentlemen,' said I, 'if the rope is ready, here is the criminal!'

The tunnel was cleared, the stake driven, the rope extended. As I moved forward to the place many of my comrades caught me by the hand and wrung it, an attention I could well have done without.

'Keep an eye on Clausel!' I whispered to Laclas; and with that, got down on my elbows and knees, took the rope in both hands, and worked myself, feet foremost, through the tunnel. When the earth failed under my feet I thought my heart would have stopped, and a moment after I was demeaning myself in mid-air like a drunken jumping-jack. I have never been a model of piety, but at this juncture prayers and a cold sweat burst from me simultaneously.

The line was knotted at intervals of eighteen inches; and to the inexpert it may seem as if it should have been even easy to descend. The trouble was this wretched piece of rope appeared to be inspired, not with life alone, but with a personal malignity against myself. It turned to the one side, paused for a moment, and then spun me like a toasting jack to the other; slipped like an eel from the clasp of my feet; kept me all the time in the most outrageous fury of exertion; and dashed me at intervals against the face of the rock. I had no eyes to see with, and I doubt if there was anything to see but darkness. I must occasionally have caught a gasp of breath, but it was quite unconscious. And the whole forces of my mind were so consumed with losing hold and getting it again,

that I could scarce have told whether I was going up or coming down.

Of a sudden I knocked against the cliff with such a thump as almost bereft me of my sense ; and, as reason twinkled back, I was amazed to find that I was in a state of rest, that the face of the precipice here inclined outwards at an angle which relieved me almost wholly of the burthen of my own weight, and that one of my feet was safely planted on a ledge. I drew one of the sweetest breaths in my experience, hugged myself against the rope, and closed my eyes in a kind of ecstasy of relief. It occurred to me next to see how far I was advanced on my unlucky journey, a point on which I had not a shadow of an idea. I looked up ; there was nothing above me but the blackness of the night and the fog. I craned timidly forward and looked down. There, upon a floor of darkness, I beheld a certain pattern of hazy lights, some of them alined as in thoroughfares, others standing apart as in solitary houses ; and before I could well realize it, or had in the least estimated my distance, a wave of nausea and vertigo warned me to lie back and close my eyes. In this situation I had really but the one wish, and that was : something else to think of ! Strange to say, I got it, a veil was torn from my mind, and I saw what a fool I was—what fools we had all been—and that I had no business to be thus dangling between earth and heaven by my arms. The only thing to have done was to have attached me to a rope and lowered me, and I had never the wit to see it till that moment.

I filled my lungs, got a good hold on my rope, and once more launched myself on the descent. As it chanced, the worst of the danger was at an end, and I was so fortunate as to be never again exposed to any violent concussion. Soon after I must have passed within a little distance of a bush of wallflower, for the scent of it came over me with that impression of reality which characterizes scents in darkness. This made me a second landmark, the ledge being my first. I began accordingly to compute intervals of time : so much to the ledge, so much again to the wallflower, so much more below. If



I were not at the bottom of the rock I calculated I must be near indeed to the end of the rope, and there was no doubt that I was not far from the end of my resources. I began to be light-headed and to be tempted to let go—now arguing that I was certainly arrived within a few feet of the level and could safely risk a fall, anon persuaded I was still close at the top, and it was idle to continue longer on the rock. In the midst of which I came to a bearing on plain ground, and had nearly wept aloud. My hands were as good as flayed, my courage entirely exhausted, and, what with the long strain and the sudden relief, my limbs shook under me with more than the violence of ague, and I was glad to cling to the rope.

But this was no time to give way. I had (by God's single mercy) got myself alive out of that fortress, and now I had to try to get the others, my comrades. There was about a fathom of rope to spare; I got it by the end, and searched the whole ground thoroughly for anything to make it fast to. In vain, the ground was broken and stony, but there grew not there so much as a bush of furze.

'Now then,' thought I to myself, 'here begins a new lesson, and I believe it will prove richer than the first. I am not strong enough to keep this rope extended. If I do not keep it extended the next man will be dashed against a precipice. There is no reason why he should have my extravagant good luck. I see no reason why he should not fall—nor any place for him to fall on but my head.'

From where I was now standing there was occasionally visible, as the fog lightened, a lamp in one of the barrack windows, which gave me a measure of the height he had to fall and the horrid force that he must strike me with. What was yet worse, we had agreed to do without signals, every so many minutes by Laclas' watch another man was to be started from the battlements. Now, I had seemed to myself to be about half an hour in my descent, and it seemed near as long again that I waited, straining on the rope for my next comrade to begin. I began to be afraid that our conspiracy was out, that my friends were

all secured, and that I should pass the remainder of the night, and be discovered in the morning, vainly clinging to the rope's end like a hooked fish upon an angle. I could not refrain, at this ridiculous image, from a chuckle of laughter. And the next moment I knew, by the jerking of the rope, that my friend had crawled out of the tunnel and was fairly launched on his descent.

It appears it was the sailor, who had insisted on succeeding me: as soon as my continued silence had assured him the rope was long enough, Gautier, for that was his name, had forgotten his former arguments, and shown himself so extremely forward, that Laclas had given way. It was like the fellow who had no harm in him beyond an instinctive selfishness. But he was like to have paid pretty dearly for the privilege. Do as I would, I could not keep the rope as I could have wished it, and he ended at last by falling on me from a height of several yards, so that we both rolled together on the ground. As soon as he could breathe he cursed me beyond belief, wept over his finger, which he had broken, and cursed me again. I bade him be still and think shame of himself to be so great a cry-baby. Did he not hear the round going by above? I asked, and who could tell but what the noise of his fall was already remarked, and the sentinels at the very moment leaning upon the battlements to listen?

The round, however, went by, and nothing was discovered; the third man came to the ground quite easily; the fourth was, of course, child's play; and before there were ten of us collected, it seemed to me that, without the least injustice to my comrades, I might proceed to take care of myself.

I knew their plan: they had a map, and an almanac, and designed for Grangemouth, where they were to steal a ship. Suppose them to do so I had no idea they were qualified to manage it after it was stolen. Their whole escape, indeed, was the most haphazard thing imaginable; only the impatience of captives and the ignorance of private soldiers would have entertained so misbegotten a device; and though I played the good comrade and

worked with them upon the tunnel, but for the lawyer's message I should have let them go without me. Well, now they were beyond my help, as they had always been beyond my counselling ; and, without word said or leave taken, I stole out of the little crowd. It is true I would rather have waited to shake hands with Laclas, but in the last man who had descended I thought I recognized Clausel, and since the scene in the shed my distrust of Clausel was perfect. I believed the man to be capable of any infamy, and events have since shown that I was right.

## II

I HAD two views. The first was, naturally, to get clear of Edinburgh Castle and the town, to say nothing of my fellow prisoners ; the second to work to the southward so long as it was night, and be near Swanston Cottage by morning. What I should do there and then, I had no guess, and did not greatly care, being a devotee of a couple of divinities called Chance and Circumstance. Prepare, if possible ; where it is impossible, work straight forward, and keep your eyes open and your tongue oiled. Wit and a good exterior—there is all life in a nutshell.

I had at first a rather chequered journey ; got involved in gardens, butted into houses, and had even once the misfortune to awake a sleeping family, the father of which, as I suppose, menaced me from the window with a blunderbuss. Altogether, though I had been some time gone from my companions, I was still at no great distance, when a miserable accident put a period to the escape. Of a sudden the night was divided by a scream. This was followed by the sound of something falling, and that again by the report of a musket from the Castle battlements. It was strange to hear the alarm spread through the city. In the fortress drums were beat and a bell rung backwards. On all hands the watchmen sprang their rattles. Even in that limbo or no-man's-land where I was wandering, lights were made in the houses ; sashes were flung up ; I could hear neighbouring

families converse from window to window, and at length I was challenged myself.

'What's that?' cried a big voice.

I could see it proceeded from a big man in a big night-cap, leaning from a one-pair window; and as I was not yet abreast of his house I judged it was more wise to answer. This was not the first time I had had to stake my fortunes on the goodness of my accent in a foreign tongue, and I have always found the moment inspiring as a gambler should. Pulling around me a sort of great coat I had made of my blanket, to cover my sulphur-coloured livery—'A friend!' said I.

'What like's all this collieshangie?' said he.

I had never heard of a collieshangie in my days, but with the racket all about us in the city, I could have no doubt as to the man's meaning.

'I do not know, sir, really,' said I; 'But I suppose some of the prisoners will have escaped

'Humph!' says he.

'Oh, sir, they will be soon taken,' I replied: 'it has been found in time Good morning, sir!'

'Ye walk late, sir?' he added.

'Oh, surely not,' said I, with a laugh. 'Earlyish, if you like!' which brought me finally beyond him, highly pleased with my success.

I was now come forth on a good thoroughfare, which led (as well as I could judge) in my direction. It brought me almost immediately through a piece of street, whence I could hear close by the springing of a watchman's rattle, and where I suppose a sixth part of the windows would be open, and the people, in all sorts of night gear, talking with a kind of tragic gusto from one to another. Here, again, I must run the gauntlet of a half-dozen questions, the rattle all the while sounding nearer; but as I was not walking inordinately quick, as I spoke like a gentleman, and the lamps were too dim to show my dress, I carried it off once more. One person, indeed, inquired where I was off to at that hour. I replied vaguely and cheerfully, and as I escaped at one end of this dangerous pass I could see the watchman's lantern

entering by the other I was now safe on a dark country highway, out of sight of lights and out of the fear of watchmen. And yet I had not gone over a hundred yards before a fellow made an ugly rush at me from the roadside. I avoided him with a leap, and stood on guard, cursing my empty hands, wondering whether I had to do with an officer or a mere footpad, and scarce knowing which to wish. My assailant stood a little; in the thick darkness I could see him bob and sidle as though he were feinting at me for an advantageous onfall. Then he spoke.

‘My good friend,’ says he, and at the first word I pricked my ears, ‘my good friend, will you oblige me with a little necessary information? Which road to Cramond?’

I laughed out clear and loud, stepped up to the convivialist, took him by the shoulders, and faced him about. ‘My good friend,’ said I, ‘I believe I know what is best for you much better than yourself, and may God forgive you the fright you have given me! There, get you gone to Edinburgh!’ And I gave a shove, which he obeyed with the passive agility of a ball, and disappeared incontinently in the darkness down the road by which I had myself come.

Once clear of this foolish fellow I went on again up a gradual hill, descended on the other side through the houses of a country village, and came at last to the bottom of the main ascent leading to the Pentlands and my destination. I was some way up when the fog began to lighten; a little farther, and I stepped by degrees into a clear starry night, and saw in front of me, and quite distinct, the summits of the Pentlands, and behind, the valley of the Forth and the city of my late captivity buried under a lake of vapour. I had but one encounter—that of a farm-cart, which I heard, from a great way ahead of me, creaking nearer in the night, and which passed me about the point of dawn like a thing seen in a dream, with two silent figures in the inside nodding to the horse’s steps. I presume they were asleep; by the shawl about her head and shoulders, one of them should

be a woman. Soon, by concurrent steps, the day began to break and the fog to subside and roll away. The east grew luminous and was barred with chilly colours, and the Castle on its rock, and the spires and chimneys of the upper town, took gradual shape, and arose, like islands, out of the receding cloud. All about me was still and sylvan ; the road mounting and winding, with nowhere a sign of any passenger, the birds chirping, I suppose for warmth, the boughs of the trees knocking together, and the red leaves falling in the wind.

It was broad day, but still bitter cold and the sun not up, when I came in view of my destination. A single gable and chimney of the cottage peeped over the shoulder of the hill ; not far off, and a trifle higher on the mountain, a tall old whitewashed farmhouse stood among the trees, beside a falling brook ; beyond were rough hills of pasture. I bethought me that shepherd folk were early risers, and if I were once seen skulking in that neighbourhood it might prove the ruin of my prospects, took advantage of a line of hedge, and worked myself up in its shadow till I was come under the garden wall of my friends' house. The cottage was a little quaint place of many rough-cast gables and grey roofs. It had something the air of a rambling infinitesimal cathedral, the body of it rising in the midst two storeys high, with a steep-pitched roof, and sending out upon all hands (as it were chapter-houses, chapels, and transepts) one-storeyed and dwarfish projections. To add to this appearance it was grotesquely decorated with crockets and gargoyles, ravished from some medieval church. The place seemed hidden away, being not only concealed in the trees of the garden, but, on the side on which I approached it, buried as high as the eaves by the rising of the ground. About the walls of the garden there went a line of well-grown elms and beeches, the first entirely bare, the last still pretty well covered with red leaves, and the centre was occupied with a thicket of laurel and holly, in which I could see arches cut and paths winding.

I was now within hail of my friends, and not much the

better. The house appeared asleep ; yet if I attempted to wake any one, I had no guarantee it might not prove either the aunt with the gold eyeglasses (whom I could only remember with trembling), or some ass of a servant-maid who should burst out screaming at sight of me. Higher up I could hear and see a shepherd shouting to his dogs and striding on the rough sides of the mountain, and it was clear I must get to cover without loss of time. No doubt the holly thickets would have proved a very suitable retreat, but there was mounted on the wall a sort of sign-board not uncommon in the country of Great Britain, and very damping to the adventurous : *Spring Guns and Man-traps* was the legend that it bore. I have learned since that these advertisements, three times out of four, were in the nature of Quaker guns on a disarmed battery ; but I had not learned it then, and even so, the odds would not have been good enough. For a choice, I would a hundred times sooner be returned to Edinburgh Castle and my corner in the bastion, than to leave my foot in a steel trap, or have to digest the contents of an automatic blunderbuss. There was but one chance left—that Ronald or Flora might be the first to come abroad ; and in order to profit by this chance if it occurred I got me on the cope of the wall in a place where it was screened by the thick branches of a beech, and sat there waiting.

As the day wore on the sun came very pleasantly out. I had been awake all night, I had undergone the most violent agitations of mind and body, and it is not so much to be wondered at, as it was exceedingly unwise and foolhardy, that I should have dropped into a doze. From this I awakened to the characteristic sound of digging, looked down, and saw immediately below me the back view of a gardener in a stable waistcoat. Now he would appear steadily immersed in his business ; anon, to my more immediate terror, he would straighten his back, stretch his arms, gaze about the otherwise deserted garden, and relish a deep pinch of snuff. It was my first thought to drop from the wall upon the other side. A glance sufficed to show me that even the way

by which I had come was now cut off, and the field behind me already occupied by a couple of shepherds' assistants and a score or two of sheep. I have named the talismans on which I habitually depend, but here was a conjuncture in which both were wholly useless. The copestone of a wall arrayed with broken bottles is no favourable rostrum ; and I might be as eloquent as Pitt, and as fascinating as Richelieu, and neither the gardener nor the shepherd lads would care a halfpenny. In short, there was no escape possible from my absurd position , there I must continue to sit until one or other of my neighbours should raise his eyes and give the signal for my capture.

The part of the wall on which (for my sins) I was posted could be scarce less than twelve feet high on the inside , the leaves of the beech which made a fashion of sheltering me were already partly fallen, and I was thus not only perilously exposed myself, but enabled to command some part of the garden walks and (under an evergreen arch) the front lawn and windows of the cottage. For long nothing stirred except my friend with the spade , then I heard the opening of a sash , and immediately after saw Miss Flora appear in a morning wrapper and come strolling hitherward between the borders, pausing and visiting her flowers—herself as fair.

*There* was a friend ; *here*, immediately beneath me, an unknown quantity—the gardener : how to communicate with the one and not attract the notice of the other ? To make a noise was out of the question ; I dared scarce to breathe. I held myself ready to make a gesture as soon as she should look, and she looked in every possible direction but the right one. She was interested in the vilest tuft of chickweed, she gazed at the summit of the mountain, she came even immediately below me and conversed on the most fastidious topics with the gardener ; but to the top of that wall she would not deign a glance ! At last she began to retrace her steps in the direction of the cottage ; whereupon, becoming quite desperate, I broke off a piece of plaster, took a happy aim, and hit her with it in the nape of the neck. She



clapped her hand to the place, turned about, looked on all sides for an explanation, and spying me (as indeed I was parting the branches to make it the more easy), half uttered and half swallowed down again a cry of surprise.

The gardener was erect upon the instant.

'What's your will, miss?' said he

Her readiness amazed me. She had already turned and was gazing in the opposite direction. 'There's a child among the artichokes,' she said.

'The plagues of Egypt!' *I'll* see to them!' cried the gardener truculently, and with a hurried waddle disappeared among the evergreens

That moment she turned, and came running towards me, her arms stretched out, her face incarnadined for the moment with heavenly blushes, the next pale as death. 'Monsieur de Saint Yves!' she said.

'My dear young lady,' I said, 'this is a shocking liberty—I know it! But what else was I to do?'

'You have escaped?' said she.

'If you call this escape,' I replied

'But you cannot possibly stop there!' she cried.

'I know it,' said I. 'And where am I to go?'

She struck her hands together. 'I have it!' she exclaimed. 'Come down by the beech trunk—you must leave no footprint in the border—quickly, before Robie can get back! I am the henwife here: I keep the key; you must go into the hen-house—for the moment.'

I was by her side at once. Both cast a hasty glance at the blank windows of the cottage and so much as was visible of the garden alleys; it seemed there was none to observe us. She caught me by the sleeve and ran. It was no time for compliments; hurry breathed upon our necks, and I ran along with her to the next corner of the garden, where a wired court and a board hovel standing in a grove of trees advertised my place of refuge. She thrust me in without a word; the bulk of the fowls were at the same time emitted; and I found myself the next moment locked in alone with half-a-dozen sitting hens.

From *St. Ives*. (By kind permission of Messrs. William

## SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

1859-

### THE STRIPED CHEST

‘**W**HAT do you make of her, Allardyce?’ I asked. My second mate was standing beside me upon the poop, with his short, thick legs astretch, for the gale had left a considerable swell behind it, and our two quarter-boats nearly touched the water with every roll. He steadied his glass against the mizzen-shrouds, and he looked long and hard at this disconsolate stranger every time she came reeling up on to the crest of a roller and hung balanced for a few seconds before swooping down upon the other side. She lay so low in the water that I could only catch an occasional glimpse of a pea-green line of bulwark.

She was a brig, but her mainmast had been snapped short off some ten feet above the deck, and no effort seemed to have been made to cut away the wreckage, which floated, sails and yards, like the broken wing of a wounded gull, upon the water beside her. The foremast was still standing, but the foretopsail was flying loose, and the headsails were streaming out in long white pennons in front of her. Never have I seen a vessel which appeared to have gone through rougher handling.

But we could not be surprised at that, for there had been times during the last three days when it was a question whether our own barque would ever see land again. For thirty-six hours we had kept her nose to it, and if the *Mary Sinclair* had not been as good a sea-boat as ever left the Clyde, we could not have gone through. And yet here we were at the end of it with the loss only of our gig and of part of the starboard bulwark. It did not astonish us, however, when the smother had cleared away, to find that others had been less lucky, and that this mutilated brig, staggering about upon a blue sea,

and under a cloudless sky, had been left, like a blinded man after a lightning flash, to tell of the terror which is past.

Allardyce, who was a slow and methodical Scotchman, stared long and hard at the little craft, while our seamen lined the bulwark or clustered upon the foreshrouds to have a view of the stranger. In latitude  $20^{\circ}$  and longitude  $10^{\circ}$ , which were about our bearings, one becomes a little curious as to whom one meets, for one has left the main lines of Atlantic commerce to the north. For ten days we had been sailing over a solitary sea.

'She's derelict, I'm thinking,' said the second mate.

I had come to the same conclusion, for I could see no sign of life upon her deck, and there was no answer to the friendly wavings from our seamen. The crew had probably deserted her under the impression that she was about to founder.

'She can't last long,' continued Allardyce, in his measured way. 'She may put her nose down and her tail up any minute. The water's lipping up to the edge of her rail.'

'What's her flag?' I asked.

'I'm trying to make out. It's got all twisted and tangled with the halyards. Yes, I've got it now, clear enough. It's the Brazilian flag, but it's wrong side up.'

She had hoisted a signal of distress, then, before her people had abandoned her. Perhaps they had only just gone. I took the mate's glass and looked round over the tumultuous face of the deep blue Atlantic, still veined and starred with white lines and spoutings of foam. But nowhere could I see anything human beyond ourselves.

'There may be living men aboard,' said I.

'There may be salvage,' muttered the second mate.

'Then we will run down upon her lee side, and lie to.'

We were not more than a hundred yards from her when we swung our foreyard aback, and there we were, the barque and the brig, ducking and bowing like two clowns in a dance.

'Drop one of the quarter-boats,' said I. 'Take four men, Mr. Allardyce, and see what you can learn of her.'

But just at that moment my first officer, Mr Armstrong, came on deck, for seven bells had struck, and it was but a few minutes off his watch. It would interest me to go myself to this abandoned vessel and to see what there might be aboard of her. So, with a word to Armstrong, I swung myself over the side, slipped down the falls, and took my place in the sheets of the boat.

It was but a little distance, but it took some time to traverse, and so heavy was the roll that often, when we were in the trough of the sea, we could not see either the barque which we had left or the brig which we were approaching. The sinking sun did not penetrate down there, and it was cold and dark in the hollows of the waves, but each passing billow heaved us up into the warmth and the sunshine once more. At each of these moments, as we hung upon a white-capped ridge between the two dark valleys, I caught a glimpse of the long, pea-green line, and the nodding foremast of the brig, and I steered so as to come round by her stern, so that we might determine which was the best way of boarding her. As we passed her we saw the name *Nossa Senhora da Vittoria* painted across her dripping counter.

‘The weather side, sir,’ said the second mate. ‘Stand by with the boathook, carpenter!’ An instant later we had jumped over the bulwarks, which were hardly higher than our boat, and found ourselves upon the deck of the abandoned vessel.

Our first thought was to provide for our own safety in case—as seemed very probable—the vessel should settle down beneath our feet. With this object two of our men held on to the painter of the boat, and fended her off from the vessel’s side, so that she might be ready in case we had to make a hurried retreat. The carpenter was sent to find out how much water there was, and whether it was still gaining, while the other seaman, Allardyce, and myself, made a rapid inspection of the vessel and her cargo.

The deck was littered with wreckage and with hen-coops, in which the dead birds were washing about. The boats were gone, with the exception of one, the bottom

of which had been stove, and it was certain that the crew had abandoned the vessel. The cabin was in a deck house, one side of which had been beaten in by a heavy sea. Allardyce and I entered it, and found the captain's table as he had left it, his books and papers—all Spanish or Portuguese—scattered over it, with piles of cigarette ash everywhere. I looked about for the log, but could not find it.

'As likely as not he never kept one,' said Allardyce. 'Things are pretty slack aboard a South American trader, and they don't do more than they can help. If there was one it must have been taken away with him in the boat.'

'I should like to take all these books and papers,' said I. 'Ask the carpenter how much time we have.'

His report was reassuring. The vessel was full of water, but some of the cargo was buoyant, and there was no immediate danger of her sinking. Probably she would never sink, but would drift about as one of those terrible, unmarked reefs which have sent so many stout vessels to the bottom.

'In that case there is no danger in your going below, Mr. Allardyce,' said I. 'See what you can make of her, and find out how much of her cargo may be saved. I'll look through these papers while you are gone.'

The bills of lading, and some notes and letters which lay upon the desk, sufficed to inform me that the Brazilian brig *Nossa Senhora da Vittoria* had cleared from Bahia a month before. The name of the captain was Texeira, but there was no record as to the number of the crew. She was bound for London, and a glance at the bills of lading was sufficient to show me that we were not likely to profit much in the way of salvage. Her cargo consisted of nuts, ginger, and wood, the latter in the shape of great logs of valuable tropical growths. It was these, no doubt, which had prevented the ill-fated vessel from going to the bottom, but they were of such a size as to make it impossible for us to extract them. Besides these, there were a few fancy goods, such as a number of ornamental birds for millinery purposes, and a hundred cases of preserved fruits. And then, as I turned over the

papers, I came upon a short note in English, which arrested my attention

'It is requested,' said the note, 'that the various old Spanish and Indian curiosities, which came out of the Santarem collection, and which are consigned to Pront-foot and Neuman, of Oxford Street, London, should be put in some place where there may be no danger of these very valuable and unique articles being injured or tampered with. This applies most particularly to the treasure-chest of Don Ramirez di Leyra, which must on no account be placed wher any one can get at it'

The treasure-chest of Don Ramirez! Unique and valuable articles! Here was a chance of salvage after all! I had risen to my feet with the paper in my hand, when my Scotch mate appeared in the doorway

'I'm thinking all isn't quite as it should be aboard of this ship, sir,' said he. He was a hard-faced man, and yet I could see that he had been startled.

'What's the matter?'

'Murder's the matter, sir. There's a man here with his brains beaten out.'

'Killed in the storm?' said I

'May be so, sir. But I'll be surprised if you think so after you have seen him.'

'Where is he, then?'

'This way, sir, here in the maindeck house.'

There appeared to have been no accommodation below in the brig, for there was the afterhouse for the captain, another by the main hatchway with the cook's galley attached to it, and a third in the forecastle for the men. It was to this middle one that the mate led me. As you entered, the galley, with its litter of tumbled pots and dishes, was upon the right, and upon the left was a small room with two bunks for the officers. Then beyond there was a place about twelve feet square, which was littered with flags and spare canvas. All round the walls were a number of packets done up in coarse cloth and carefully lashed to the woodwork. At the other end was a great box, striped red and white, though the red was so faded and the white so dirty that it was only where the light

fell directly upon it that one could see the colouring. The box was, by subsequent measurement, four feet three inches in length, three feet two inches in height, and three feet across—considerably larger than a seaman's chest.

But it was not to the box that my eyes or my thoughts were turned as I entered the store-room. On the floor, lying across the litter of bunting, there was stretched a small, dark man with a short, curling beard. He lay as far as it was possible from the box, with his feet towards it and his head away. A crimson patch was printed upon the white canvas on which his head was resting, and little red ribbons wreathed themselves round his swarthy neck and trailed away on to the floor, but there was no sign of a wound that I could see, and his face was as placid as that of a sleeping child.

It was only when I stooped that I could perceive his injury, and then I turned away with an exclamation of horror. He had been pole-axed; apparently by some person standing behind him. A frightful blow had smashed in the top of his head and penetrated deeply into his brain. His face might well be placid, for death must have been absolutely instantaneous, and the position of the wound showed that he could never have seen the person who had inflicted it.

'Is that foul play or accident, Captain Barclay?' asked my second mate, demurely.

'You are quite right, Mr Allardyce. The man has been murdered, struck down from above by a sharp and heavy weapon. But who was he, and why did they murder him?'

'He was a common seaman, sir,' said the mate. 'You can see that if you look at his fingers.' He turned out his pockets as he spoke and brought to light a pack of cards, some tarred string, and a bundle of Brazilian tobacco.

'Hullo, look at this!'

It was a large, open knife, with a stiff spring blade which he had picked up from the floor. The steel was shining and bright, so that we could not associate it with the crime, and yet the dead man had apparently held

it in his hand when he was struck down, for it still lay within his grasp.

'It looks to me, sir, as if he knew he was in danger, and kept his knife handy,' said the mate. 'However, we can't help the poor beggar now. I can't make out these things that are lashed to the wall. They seem to be idols and weapons and curios of all sorts done up in old sacking.'

'That's right,' said I. 'They are the only things of value that we are likely to get from the cargo. Hail the barque and tell them to send the other quarter-boat to help us to get the stuff aboard.'

While he was away I examined this curious plunder which had come into our possession. The curiosities were so wrapped up that I could only form a general idea as to their nature, but the striped box stood in a good light where I could thoroughly examine it. On the lid, which was clamped and cornered with metal-work, there was engraved a complex coat of arms, and beneath it was a line of Spanish which I was able to decipher as meaning, 'The treasure-chest of Don Ramirez di Leyra, Knight of the Order of Saint James, Governor and Captain-General of Terra Firma and of the Province of Veraquas.' In one corner was the date 1606, and on the other a large white label, upon which was written in English, 'You are earnestly requested, upon no account, to open this box.' The same warning was repeated underneath in Spanish. As to the lock, it was a very complex and heavy one of engraved steel, with a Latin motto, which was above a seaman's comprehension.

By the time I had finished this examination of the peculiar box, the other quarter-boat with Mr. Armstrong, the first officer, had come alongside, and we began to carry out and place in her the various curiosities which appeared to be the only objects worth moving from the derelict ship. When she was full I sent her back to the barque, and then Allardyce and I, with a carpenter and one seaman, shifted the striped box, which was the only thing left, to our boat, and lowered it over, balancing it upon the two middle thwarts, for it was so heavy that it



would have given the boat a dangerous tilt had we placed it at either end. As to the dead man, we left him where we had found him.

The mate had a theory that, at the moment of the desertion of the ship, this fellow had started plundering, and that the captain, in an attempt to preserve discipline, had struck him down with a hatchet or some other heavy weapon. It seemed more probable than any other explanation, and yet it did not entirely satisfy me either. But the ocean is full of mysteries, and we were content to leave the fate of the dead seaman of the Brazilian brig to be added to that long list which every sailor can recall.

The heavy box was slung up by ropes on to the deck of the *Mary Sinclair*, and was carried by four seamen into the cabin, where, between the table and the after-lockers, there was just space for it to stand. There it remained during supper, and after that meal the mates remained with me, and discussed over a glass of grog the event of the day. Mr. Armstrong was a long, thin, vulture-like man, an excellent seaman, but famous for his nearness and cupidity. Our treasure-trove had excited him greatly, and already he had begun with glistening eyes to reckon up how much it might be worth to each of us when the shares of the salvage came to be divided.

'If the paper said that they were unique, Mr. Barclay, then they may be worth anything that you like to name. You wouldn't believe the sums that the rich collectors give. A thousand pounds is nothing to them. We'll have something to show for our voyage, or I am mistaken.'

'I don't think that,' said I. 'As far as I can see they are not very different from any other South American curios.'

'Well, sir, I've traded there for fourteen voyages, and I have never seen anything like that chest before. That's worth a pile of money, just as it stands. But it's so heavy, that surely there must be something valuable inside it. Don't you think that we ought to open it and see?'

'If you break it open you will spoil it, as likely as not,' said the second mate.

Armstrong squatted down in front of it, with his head on one side, and his long, thin nose within a few inches of the lock

'The wood is oak,' said he, 'and it has shrunk a little with age. If I had a chisel or a strong-bladed knife I could force the lock back without doing any damage at all.'

The mention of a strong-bladed knife made me think of the dead seaman upon the brig.

'I wonder if he could have been on the job when some one came to interfere with him,' said I.

'I don't know about that, sir, but I am perfectly certain that I could open the box. There's a screwdriver here in the locker. Just hold the lamp, Allardyce, and I'll have it done in a brace of shakes.'

'Wait a bit,' said I, for already, with eyes which gleamed with curiosity and with avarice, he was stooping over the lid. 'I don't see that there is any hurry over this matter. You've read that card which warns us not to open it. It may mean anything or it may mean nothing, but somehow I feel inclined to obey it. After all, whatever is in it will keep, and if it is valuable it will be worth as much if it is opened in the owner's offices as in the cabin of the *Mary Sinclair*.'

The first officer seemed bitterly disappointed at my decision.

'Surely, sir, you are not superstitious about it,' said he, with a slight sneer upon his thin lips. 'If it gets out of our own hands, and we don't see for ourselves what is inside it, we may be done out of our rights; besides——'

'That's enough, Mr. Armstrong,' said I, abruptly. 'You may have every confidence that you will get your rights, but I will not have that box opened to-night.'

'Why, the label itself shows that the box has been examined by Europeans,' Allardyce added. 'Because a box is a treasure-box is no reason that it has treasures inside it now. A good many folk have had a peep into it since the days of the old Governor of Terra Furma.'

Armstrong threw the screwdriver down upon the table and shrugged his shoulders.

'Just as you like,' said he, but for the rest of the evening, although we spoke upon many subjects, I noticed that his eyes were continually coming round, with the same expression of curiosity and greed, to the old striped box.

And now I come to that portion of my story which fills me even now with a shuddering horror when I think of it. The main cabin had the rooms of the officers round it, but mine was the farthest away from it at the end of the little passage which led to the companion. No regular watch was kept by me, except in cases of emergency, and the three mates divided the watches among them. Armstrong had the middle watch, which ends at four in the morning, and he was relieved by Allardyce. For my part I have always been one of the soundest of sleepers, and it is rare for anything less than a hand upon my shoulder to arouse me.

And yet I was aroused that night, or rather in the early grey of the morning. It was just half-past four by my chronometer when something caused me to sit up in my berth wide awake and with every nerve tingling. It was a sound of some sort, a crash with a human cry at the end of it, which still jarred upon my ears. I sat listening, but all was now silent. And yet it could not have been imagination, that hideous cry, for the echo of it still rang in my head, and it seemed to have come from some place quite close to me. I sprang from my bunk, and, pulling on some clothes, I made my way into the cabin.

At first I saw nothing unusual there. In the cold, grey light I made out the red-clothed table, the six rotating chairs, the walnut lockers, the swinging barometer, and there, at the end, the big striped chest. I was turning away with the intention of going upon deck and asking the second mate if he had heard anything, when my eyes fell suddenly upon something which projected from under the table. It was the leg of a man—a leg with a long sea-boot upon it. I stooped, and there was a figure sprawling upon his face, his arms thrown forward, and his body twisted. One glance told me that it was Armstrong, the first officer, and a second that he was a dead

man For a few moments I stood gasping. Then I rushed on to the deck, called Allardyce to my assistance, and came back with him into the cabin.

Together we pulled the unfortunate fellow from under the table, and as we looked at his dripping head we exchanged glances, and I do not know which was the paler of the two.

‘The same as the Spanish sailor,’ said I.

‘The very same God preserve us! It’s that infernal chest! Look at Armstrong’s hand!’

He held up the mate’s right hand, and there was the screwdriver which he had wished to use the night before.

‘He’s been at the chest, sir. He knew that I was on deck and you asleep. He knelt down in front of it, and he pushed the lock back with that tool. Then something happened to him, and he cried out so that you heard him.’

‘Allardyce,’ I whispered, ‘what *could* have happened to him?’

The second mate put his hand upon my sleeve and drew me into his cabin.

‘We can talk here, sir, and we don’t know who may be listening to us in there. What do you suppose is in that box, Captain Barclay?’

‘I give you my word, Allardyce, that I have no idea.’

‘Well, I can only find one theory which will fit all the facts. Look at the size of the box. Look at all the carving and metal-work which may conceal any number of holes. Look at the weight of it; it took four men to carry it. On the top of that, remember that two men have tried to open it, and both have come to their end through it. Now, sir, what can it mean except one thing?’

‘You mean there is a man in it?’

‘Of course there is a man in it. You know how it is in these South American States, sir. A man may be President one week and hunted like a dog the next. They are for ever flying for their lives. My idea is that there is some fellow in hiding there, who is armed and desperate, and who will fight to the death before he is taken.’

‘But his food and drink?’

'It's a roomy chest, sir, and he may have some provisions stowed away. As to his drink, he had a friend among the crew upon the brig who saw that he had what he needed.'

'You think, then, that the label asking people not to open the box was simply written in his interest?'

'Yes, sir, that is my idea. Have you any other way of explaining the facts?'

I had to confess that I had not.

'The question is what are we to do?' I asked.

'The man's a dangerous ruffian who sticks at nothing. I'm thinking it wouldn't be a bad thing to put a rope round the chest and tow it alongside for half an hour; then we could open it at our ease. Or if we just tied the box up and kept him from getting any water, maybe that would do as well. Or the carpenter could put a coat of varnish over it and stop all the blowholes.'

'Come, Allardyce,' said I, angrily. 'You don't seriously mean to say that a whole ship's company are going to be terrorized by a single man in a box? If he's there, I'll engage to fetch him out!' I went to my room and came back with my revolver in my hand. 'Now, Allardyce,' said I. 'Do you open the lock, and I'll stand on guard.'

'For God's sake, think what you are doing, sir!' cried the mate. 'Two men have lost their lives over it, and the blood of one not yet dry upon the carpet.'

'The more reason why we should revenge him.'

'Well, sir, at least let me call the carpenter. Three are better than two, and he is a good stout man.'

He went off in search of him, and I was left alone with the striped chest in the cabin. I don't think that I'm a nervous man, but I kept the table between me and this solid old relic of the Spanish Main. In the growing light of morning the red and white striping was beginning to appear, and the curious scrolls and wreaths of metal and carving which showed the loving pains which cunning craftsmen had expended upon it. Presently the carpenter and the mate came back together, the former with a hammer in his hand.

It's a bad business, this, sir, said he, shaking his head, as he looked at the body of the mate. 'And you think there's some one hiding in the box?'

'There's no doubt about it,' said Allardyce, picking up the screwdriver and setting his jaw like a man who needs to brace his courage. 'I'll drive the lock back if you will both stand by. If he rises let him have it on the head with your hammer, carpenter! Shoot at once, sir, if he raises his hand. Now!'

He had knelt down in front of the striped chest, and passed the blade of the tool under the lid. With a sharp snick the lock flew back. 'Stand by!' yelled the mate, and with a heave he threw open the massive top of the box. As it swung up, we all three sprang back, I with my pistol levelled and the carpenter with the hammer above his head. Then, as nothing happened, we each took a step forward and peeped in. The box was empty.

Not quite empty either, for in one corner was lying an old yellow candlestick, elaborately engraved, which appeared to be as old as the box itself. Its rich yellow tone and artistic shape suggested that it was an object of value. For the rest there was nothing more weighty or valuable than dust in the old striped treasure-chest.

'Well, I'm blessed!' cried Allardyce, staring blankly into it. 'Where does the weight come in, then?'

'Look at the thickness of the sides and look at the lid. Why, it's five inches through. And see that great metal spring across it.'

'That's for holding the lid up,' said the mate. 'You see, it won't lean back. What's that German printing on the inside?'

'It means that it was made by Johann Rothstein of Augsburg, in 1606.'

'And a solid bit of work, too. But it doesn't throw much light on what has passed, does it, Captain Barclay? That candlestick looks like gold. We shall have something for our trouble after all.'

He leant forward to grasp it, and from that moment I have never doubted as to the reality of inspiration, for on the instant I caught him by the collar and pulled him

straight again. It may have been some story of the Middle Ages which had come back to my mind, or it may have been that my eye had caught some red which was not that of rust upon the upper part of the lock, but to him and to me it will always seem an inspiration, so prompt and sudden was my action.

'There's devilry here,' said I. 'Give me the crooked stick from the corner.'

It was an ordinary walking-stick with a hooked top. I passed it over the candlestick and gave it a pull. With a flash a row of polished steel fangs shot out from below the upper lip, and the great striped chest snapped at us like a wild animal. Clang came the huge lid into its place, and the glasses on the swinging rack sang and tinkled with the shock. The mate sat down on the edge of the table and shivered like a frightened horse.

'You've saved my life, Captain Barclay!' said he.

So this was the secret of the striped treasure-chest of old Don Ramirez di Leyra, and this was how he preserved his ill-gotten gains from the Teria Firma and the Province of Veraquas. Be the thief ever so cunning he could not tell that golden candlestick from the other articles of value, and the instant that he laid hand upon it the terrible spring was unloosed and the murderous steel spikes were driven into his brain, while the shock of the blow sent the victim backwards and enabled the chest to automatically close itself. How many, I wondered, had fallen victims to the ingenuity of the Mechanic of Augsburg. And as I thought of the possible history of that grim striped chest my resolution was very quickly taken.

'Carpenter, bring three men and carry this on deck.'

'Going to throw it overboard, sir?'

'Yes, Mr. Akardyce. I'm not superstitious as a rule, but there are some things which are more than a sailor can be called upon to stand.'

'No wonder that brig made heavy weather, Captain Barclay, with such a thing on board. The glass is dropping fast, sir, and we are only just in time.'

So we did not even wait for the three sailors, but we

carried it out, the mate, the carpenter, and I, and we pushed it with our own hands over the bulwarks. There was a white spout of water, and it was gone. There it lies, the striped chest, a thousand fathoms deep, and if, as they say, the sea will some day be dry land, I grieve for the man who finds that old box and tries to penetrate into its secret.

From *Tales of Pirates and Blue Water*. (By kind permission of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr John Murray )



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